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Evaluation

Annual report on evaluation in UNDP in 2006*

Summary

The 2006 annual report on evaluation covers the period from March 2006 to February 2007 and highlights initiatives taken in UNDP and its associated funds and programmes to strengthen the evaluation function in line with the evaluation policy that was approved in June 2006. Key stakeholders of the organization and national partners have been engaged; guidelines and supporting mechanisms have been produced and disseminated; and the United Nations reform agenda has been supported through joint evaluations and action with the United Nations Evaluation Group.

The report presents information on the coverage and quality of independent and decentralized evaluations and their institutional arrangements. The report also highlights significant and systemic findings and recommendations drawn from independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office and evaluations by the associated funds and programmes, identifying a number of organizational lessons. The report presents the proposed programme of work for the Evaluation Office.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to (a) take note of the report; (b) commend UNDP on progress in implementing the evaluation policy; (c) request UNDP to address the systemic issues raised by evaluation; and (d) approve the evaluation agenda proposed by the Evaluation Office.

* The compilation of data required to provide the Executive Board with the most current data has delayed submission of the present document.

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I. The evaluation function

A. Introduction

1. Evaluation in UNDP provides decision makers and the public an objective assessment of the UNDP contribution to development results. The body of evaluations covers UNDP programmes and operations, including its policies, strategies, advocacy, advisory services, knowledge networks and partnerships. Three main types of evaluations contribute to the evidence base in UNDP: independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office; decentralized evaluations commissioned by programme units, including country offices, regional bureaux and policy bureaux; and evaluations conducted or commissioned by the associated funds and programmes. The key principles underpinning these evaluations are national ownership, human development and human rights, coordination and alignment in the United Nations system, and managing for results.

2. In line with the UNDP evaluation policy approved by the Executive Board at its annual session in 2006, a number of initiatives have been taken to transform the evaluation function. The priorities have been: to engage key stakeholders of the organization and national partners in implementing the policy; to produce and disseminate guidelines, directives and supporting mechanisms for commissioning, conducting and using evaluations; and to support the United Nations reform agenda, particularly by participating in and, in some instances, leading a number of initiatives under the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

3. Chapter I of the present report presents the progress made in the areas described above during the reporting period. Chapter II highlights key findings and lessons learned from independent evaluations and evaluations commissioned by the associated funds and programmes, and chapter III presents the programme of work for the Evaluation Office for 2007-2008.

B. Implementation of the UNDP evaluation policy

4. In August 2006, the Administrator issued a directive to all resident representatives outlining the key implications of the policy. The directive drew attention to the importance of national ownership, compliance requirements and the use of evaluation for improving UNDP effectiveness.

Engaging stakeholders

5. Between October 2006 and February 2007, a total of 360 people were brought together through five regional workshops. The participants represented 117 country offices and 87 national governments, members of the Executive Board, other United Nations organizations, headquarters bureaux and units, professional evaluation associations, development institutions and academia. The workshops addressed the implementation of the policy in the context of evaluation at regional and national levels. It was found that inadequate engagement of national stakeholders in the evaluation process had hindered the optimal use of evaluations at the country level. National ownership was identified as the critical link between improving the relevance and use of evaluation in UNDP. The poor timing of evaluations, either through inappropriate planning or through delays in the evaluation process, and the weak dissemination of evaluation findings, the lack of translation to local languages, lengthy reports, the use of United Nations terminology and the poor quality of evaluation – had all hindered the use of evaluation.

Developing guidelines and directives

6. The operational guidelines and quality criteria for the planning, commissioning and use of evaluation were developed as part of the *UNDP User Guide on Programming for Results*. They contribute to the integration of evaluation requirements in the UNDP programming cycle. To

standardize the conduct of evaluation, operational guidelines were also developed for independent evaluations. These guidelines sought to clarify procedures, quality criteria and roles and responsibilities. The development of these operational guidelines will be complemented by the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation*, currently being updated by the Evaluation Office. The handbook will provide the tools, techniques and references needed to respond to the guiding principles in evaluation and to support UNDP staff, evaluators and national partners in enhancing their ability to plan, design and conduct evaluations.

Using evaluations and preparing management response

7. There has been an organizational transformation regarding the use of evaluation for accountability, informed decision-making and organizational learning. Senior management regularly discuss issues relating to evaluation, including the evaluation agenda, systemic findings from evaluations, oversight and evaluation, and follow-up to evaluation. There has also been an organization-wide commitment to draw lessons from independent evaluations in the formulation of the cumulative multi-year funding framework (MYFF) report and the forthcoming UNDP strategic plan.

8. The management response system at the corporate level has been institutionalized, as demonstrated by the systematic preparation of management responses to all independent evaluations. Evaluations presented to the Executive Board are accompanied by management responses. At the decentralized level, the institutionalization of the system requires more concerted efforts in 2007. The associated funds and programmes have also been actively engaged in addressing the mechanisms for enhancing the use of evaluations and are coordinating their efforts with the Evaluation Office in finalizing operational mechanisms to institute the management response system.

Developing support mechanisms

9. To support management accountability for evaluation, the online information management system, the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC), maintained by the Evaluation Office, was revamped to provide timely data on evaluation planning, management response and follow-up. The associated funds and programmes are working with the Evaluation Office to adopt the ERC to meet their requirements for planning and accountability.

10. To facilitate the public disclosure of all UNDP evaluations, ERC has been made publicly accessible. The ERC serves as the primary UNDP tool for knowledge management in evaluation. To date, it contains more than 600 evaluation reports and 150 terms of reference.

11. The Evaluation Network (EvalNet) is another tool for knowledge sharing in UNDP; in early 2007 it had 1,150 members (an increase of 24 per cent over last year) from UNDP and other United Nations organizations. Developing the potential of EvalNet as a dynamic tool will be a priority for the Evaluation Office in 2007.

Enhancing quality

12. To strengthen the quality and relevance of independent evaluations, the Evaluation Office establishes, for each evaluation, an external expert panel to comment on the terms of reference, methodology and draft report. The engagement with stakeholders during the process of evaluation has also been strengthened. To support the quality of decentralized evaluation, the Evaluation Office has continued to provide advisory services on a request basis. A more rigorous quality assurance system based on UNEG standards for evaluation and evaluation policy principles is under development.

C. United Nations reform and evaluation

13. The year 2006 witnessed a number of efforts directed towards United Nations system coordination and global partnerships in evaluation. In its role as chair of the UNEG, the UNDP Evaluation Office pursued a rigorous agenda for advancing coherence and innovation.

14. UNDP led the work within UNEG for developing approaches to and the conduct of joint evaluations, notably in a partnership with the Government of South Africa to evaluate the contribution of the total United Nations system to the country's development. To support the ongoing work to develop guiding principles and frameworks for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), UNDP co-led the assessment of dimensions for evaluating the UNDAF and provided inputs to update the guidelines on the Common Country Assessment (CCA)/UNDAF and to redefine roles and responsibilities for the evaluation function in the framework of the United Nations reform process.

15. UNDP co-led the UNEG task force on evaluation and oversight. A UNEG position paper was drafted, highlighting the distinctive role of evaluation in the development of a culture of learning and change, the requirements to conduct evaluation collaboratively and openly and the need for public access to all evaluations.

16. Through its participation in the UNEG task force on capacity development, UNDP contributed to the development of competency profiles for United Nations evaluators and to pilot a training programme to develop the required competencies. A continuing agenda item for United Nations organizations is raising the standards and promoting quality assurance functions for evaluation in each programme, office and organization of the United Nations system. Following a pilot assessment of the UNDP evaluation function and that of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Network on Evaluation, lessons learned were used to develop a standard framework for assessing the evaluation functions of United Nations organizations. A joint UNEG/DAC task force on peer review of evaluations was established, and UNDP continued to be an active member of the task force.

17. Several initiatives have been started to enhance coherence in decentralized evaluations. The Regional Service Centre in Bratislava established a joint UNICEF-UNDP work plan to strengthen regional cooperation in evaluation in January 2006. Since then, discussions took place on joint response to regional monitoring and evaluation needs, presentations were made on the United Nations approach to evaluation, and the regional evaluation support was extended from Bratislava at the regional meeting of UNICEF deputy representatives in Geneva.

18. An area of urgency in the United Nations reform agenda is the independent system-wide evaluation of the eight One United Nations country pilots, covering both the first phase of organizing the United Nations system to deliver as one and followed by the subsequent implementation phase with a strong focus on impact pertaining to country priorities. UNEG is gearing up collectively to take a lead role in the evaluation of the pilot countries. Besides the conduct of evaluations, UNEG is also actively involved in supporting the development of an independent United Nations system-wide evaluation mechanism to evaluate system-wide goals.

D. Independent evaluation

19. The Evaluation Office is responsible for ensuring that key practice areas and programmes are covered by its independent evaluations to support decision-making, learning and accountability. In the reporting period, the Evaluation Office conducted the following 15 independent evaluations which represented a 100 per cent increase from 2005: the evaluation of UNDP assistance to

conflict-affected countries, the evaluation of the national human development report system, the joint assessment of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)-UNDP cooperation agreement, the joint evaluation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) activity cycle and modalities, the joint evaluation on the impact of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, three evaluations of the regional cooperation frameworks (RCFs) in the Asia-Pacific, Africa and Latin America regions, respectively, and seven Assessments of Development Results (ADRs) or country-level evaluations in Bhutan, Colombia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Jordan, Montenegro, Nicaragua, and Serbia.

20. The above-mentioned evaluations addressed areas of strategic importance for UNDP. They include crisis prevention and recovery, which is a UNDP core practice area with activities in conflict-affected countries constituting nearly 40 per cent of its global expenditure in 2005; advocacy for human development through the national human development reports, which are the organization's most visible instrument for advocating sustainable human development around the world; partnership and United Nations reform through the assessment of the UNIDO and UNDP partnership; and energy and environment, which is another UNDP core practice area, and one supported by a strong partnership with GEF.

21. There was an overall increase in the number of the evaluations of regional and country programmes, as represented by the RCF evaluations and ADRs. Three RCF evaluations were undertaken to inform the formulation of the new regional programmes. In response to demand for increasing evaluation coverage at the country level in UNDP, the number of ADRs increased from 4 in 2005 to 7 in 2006. The evaluations of the RCFs and ADRs altogether covered programmes with a total budget of $748 million in 2006, marking a significant increase from $162 million in 2005. The $748 million represents just over 7 per cent of the total programmatic expenditures in UNDP, which amounted to $10.5 billion between 2004 and 2007.

Joint evaluation

22. During the reporting period, the Evaluation Office completed three joint evaluations. The joint assessment of the UNIDO-UNDP cooperation agreement, as required by a partnership agreement, looked at the role of UNDP in providing a platform for making knowledge of non-resident United Nations specialized agencies accessible to the member countries. The joint evaluation of GEF project cycles and modalities for the first time brought together 10 GEF executing agencies, and the GEF council has already authorized the implementation of key recommendations from the evaluation.

23. More than 40 humanitarian and development cooperation agencies came together to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami. The Evaluation Office was a member of the core management group and also co-led one of the five thematic studies, focusing on the impact of the international response to the tsunami on local and national capacities. The synthesis report of the joint evaluation, presented to the Economic and Social Council in July 2006, provided a broader system-wide analysis of the international response to the tsunami than any single agency evaluation had.

Methodology and approach

24. In conducting independent evaluations, the Evaluation Office sought to standardize procedures and approaches. One of the examples, as per Executive Board decision 2005/35, was the systematic application of a meta-evaluation approach in the RCF evaluations. However, the lack of adequate outcome evaluations of the regional programmes commissioned by the regional bureaux constrained the ability of the Evaluation Office to do so. To complete the evaluations, the evaluators had to rely more heavily on project documents while also collecting primary data via

interviews. This experience showed that the success of meta-analysis requires quality coverage in decentralized evaluations as building blocks for independent evaluation.

25. The Evaluation Office institutionalized stakeholder workshops at the beginning and end of the ADR process to enhance the efficiency of the process as well as national ownership and the utility of the ADRs. In particular, the workshops towards the end of the process proved to be immensely helpful in ensuring that the recommendations from the evaluation would inform the new Country Programme Document (CPD).

26. Through its participation in the joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, the Evaluation Office benefited from the use of new and innovative methodologies and tools, including claimholder surveys in two countries, which involved more than 2,000 households. As part of quality assurance, the evaluation team applied innovative means, including peer reviews and entry and exit stakeholder workshops.

Use of independent evaluation

27. The evidence from the newly completed CPDs confirms the positive impact of rigorous consultative processes and timeliness of the ADRs on the overall use of the ADR findings and recommendations. For example, the Yemen country programme document takes into full consideration the ADR recommendations regarding governance through improved institutional capacity at centralized and decentralized levels. It also acknowledges the need for improving aid coordination.

28. At the corporate level, UNDP management demonstrated its commitment to the effective use of independent evaluations by ensuring the submission of management responses together with evaluation reports to the Executive Board. Significantly, management further committed to the preparation of a management response to the joint evaluation on the impact of international response to the tsunami on local and national capacities, although the report was not presented to the UNDP Executive Board. With regards to tracking, the systematic use of the ERC as a management tool has been limited. There is a need for management to clarify roles and responsibilities for implementing committed actions in a timely manner, and also for updating information in the ERC tracking system to support the organization's results management and corporate reporting.

E. Decentralized evaluations

29. The evaluation policy requires all programme units – country offices, regional bureaux and practice and policy bureaux – to develop an evaluation plan for the programming cycle, commission the evaluations of their responsible programmes to external evaluators as planned, and prepare management responses to all evaluations to ensure the systematic use of evaluation. Programme units commission two main types of decentralized evaluations: outcome and project evaluations. During the reporting period, programme units commissioned 191 evaluations.[1] Of these, 29 were outcome evaluations, including three outcome evaluations commissioned by the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. The regional bureaux completed the total of seven evaluations of their respective projects and programmes (see list in annex 1, available on the Executive Board website). Table 1 indicates the evaluation coverage at the country level during the reporting period.

[1] To improve the method of reporting in the Annual Report on Evaluation, the Evaluation Office used the data in the ERC, which is based on the actual number of evaluation reports uploaded by responsible units as completed evaluations. Due to this new data collection method, this year's report does not show trends over time.

Table 1. Evaluations commissioned by country offices in 2006

		Global (142)	Regions (No. of countries)					LDCs* (50)
			Africa (45)	Asia and the Pacific (25)	Arab States (19)	Europe and the CIS (27)	Latin America and the Caribbean (26)	
1	Total number of all evaluations	184	38	42	12	45	47	56
2	Of which project evaluations	150	29	38	10	33	40	47
3	Of which outcome evaluations	26	5	3	1	12	5	4
4	Or which other evaluations	8	4	1	1	0	2	5
5	% of *outcome* evaluations in total evaluations	14%	13%	7%	8%	27%	11%	7%
6	% of countries with at least one evaluation of *any type*	48%	36%	56%	32%	70%	50%	44%
7	% of countries with at least one *outcome* evaluation	13%	9%	12%	5%	26%	15%	8%
8	Average no. of evaluations per country	1.30	0.84	1.68	0.68	1.67	1.81	1.12
9	Average no. of evaluations per country that conducted at least one evaluation of *any type*	2.71	2.38	3.00	2.00	2.37	3.62	2.55

* Least developed countries, as defined by the United Nations.

30. At the country level, UNDP had 142 units[2] which plan and commission external evaluations. During the reporting period, country offices completed 184 evaluations. They were dominated by 150 project evaluations. Only 26 outcome evaluations, representing 14 per cent of total evaluations, were completed during the reporting year.

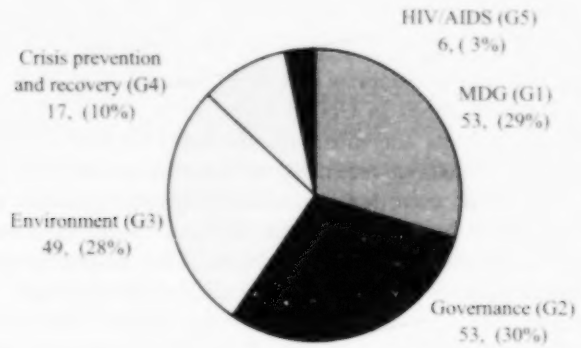
31. Only 48 per cent of country offices conducted at least one evaluation of any type. Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) had the highest percentage (70) of countries with any evaluation, and the Arab States had the lowest percentage (32). In terms of outcome evaluations, Europe and the CIS also had the highest proportion, representing 27 per cent of total evaluations that were completed in the region. Asia and the Pacific had the smallest proportion of outcome evaluations, representing only 7 per cent of the total evaluations conducted in the region. Europe and the CIS had the highest percentage (26) of countries in the region with at least one outcome evaluation in 2006. The Arab States had the lowest percentage, 5 per cent.

32. There was also noticeable variation in terms of the depth of evaluation, which ranged from 0.68 evaluations in Africa to 1.81 evaluations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Among those with at least one evaluation at any time, the average number ranged from 2.00 in the Arab States to 3.62 evaluations in Latin America and the Caribbean. This shows a high concentration of evaluations among 50 per cent of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

[2] These units will be referred to as 'countries' in this report.

33. Forty-four per cent of the offices in 50 LDCs completed any type of evaluation. Further, the percentage of outcome evaluations in total evaluations, 7 per cent, represents only half of the global figure of 14 per cent. These patterns suggest that the country offices in LDCs are giving less emphasis to the conduct of outcome evaluations. The average number of evaluations per country was also found to be lower than the global figure.

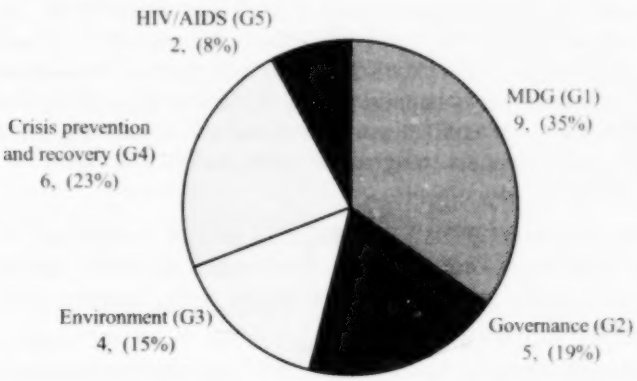
Figure 1. Thematic coverage by 178* evaluations of any type at the country level in 2006



* This excludes 6 cross-thematic evaluations.

34. The thematic coverage of evaluations of any type continues to be commensurate with resource allocations in UNDP. More than 50 per cent of decentralized evaluations focused on MYFF goals 1 and 2, "achieving the MDGs and reducing human poverty" and "fostering democratic governance", which represent the two largest resource allocations (see figure 1). In the case of outcome evaluations, goal 1 had the highest proportion, followed by goal 4 'crisis prevention and recovery' (see figure 2). In both cases, goal 5, "responding to HIV/AIDS" had the lowest proportion.

Figure 2. Thematic coverage by 26 outcome evaluation at the country level in 2006



Evaluation plan

35. All 23 country offices that are submitting a new CPD to the June 2006 Board session met the requirement of preparing an evaluation plan. To date, 74 per cent of 142 country offices entered an active and up-to-date evaluation plan in the ERC. The evaluation plans available in the ERC seem to be comprehensive and compliant. However, as the plan lacks information on the evaluation planning process, it is difficult to assess the degree of partner engagement in the development of the plan. Prevailing evidence also indicates that national participation in the strategic selection of evaluation is generally weak, and this affects the use of evaluation by government and other stakeholders.

Quality of evaluation

36. The Evaluation Office used selected criteria in the UNEG Norms and Standards to conduct a preliminary review of 16 outcome evaluations that were completed in 2006. The review indicated that the quality of outcome evaluations in UNDP was uneven. Some of evaluations limited their focus to project activities or outputs and did not sufficiently analyse outcome-level results. The objectives or questions of the evaluation were often unclear. There was also, generally, the absence of a rigorous analysis of UNDP contributions to development changes at the national level. Furthermore, the review pointed out that often the allocated financial resources and time were inadequate in terms of the scope and design of evaluation. Also, unclear programme objectives and overly ambitious outcome definitions constrained the conduct of evaluations.

Management response

37. Since the launch of the tracking system in 2006, 10 decentralized evaluations have so far been accompanied by a management response in the ERC. This represents less than 20 per cent of all evaluations that were completed since the launch. As the system is relatively new, it is too early to analyse the impact of the management response system on the overall use of evaluations in UNDP country offices. Although the new system is broadly welcomed at the country level, its success requires the organization to address incentives in improving the culture of use.

F. Evaluations by the associated funds and programmes

38. In conformity with requirements for mandatory evaluation, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) commissioned four evaluations in 2006, including three evaluations of its local development programmes in Mozambique, Nepal and Niger, and a mid-term evaluation to assess progress in developing a sustainable pro-poor financial sector in Sierra Leone.

39. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) commenced a strategic evaluation of the UNIFEM MYFF, 2004-2007, with the objective of using the results in the formulation of its strategic plan, 2008-2011. It also began two outcome and programme evaluations, i.e., the programme to support women's leadership in reconstructing Afghanistan and the programme on women for conflict prevention and peace-building in South Caucasus. Other units of UNIFEM completed six programme and outcome evaluations and one programme evaluation.

40. United Nations Volunteers (UNV) completed 14 project evaluations, including 2 evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Unit on UNV involvement in urban development and a special voluntary fund and 12 undertaken by decentralized units, namely UNV headquarters-based geographical and practice sections.

41. Within UNV, a significant achievement in 2006 was the development of a methodology in collaboration with other partners, including the Evaluation Office, to assess the contribution of volunteerism to development. Apart from producing information on the contribution of volunteerism, the methodology identifies ways of strengthening the role of volunteerism in

development planning. The methodology, tested by UNV and other international volunteer organizations in 12 countries, was used to capture results from UNV involvement in the tsunami response in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

G. Institutional arrangements for evaluation

Independent evaluation

42. To reinforce the independence of the evaluation function in UNDP, the Evaluation Office now reports directly to the Executive Board through the Administrator and submits evaluation reports without any internal clearance. The Evaluation Office continued to work closely with the Office of Audit and Performance Review and other oversight mechanisms, as the evaluation function co-exists and mutually supports their functions. The Evaluation Office also periodically provided UNDP management with briefs on issues related to evaluations, including follow-up to evaluations, compliance and other emerging issues to support informed decision-making.

43. The work of the Evaluation Office in 2006 was supported by the core budget, amounting to $3.7 million, and the delivery rate was 96 per cent. Another major source of funding came from a partnership agreement with the United Kingdom Department for International Development in the amount of $677,000. Commensurate with the increased number of evaluations and increased functions in quality assurance and enhancement, the number of professional and general service posts in the Evaluation Office was increased from 15 to 20 in 2006. This includes one professional position for the UNEG secretariat.

Decentralized evaluation

44. The capacity within the offices to manage the evaluation function, including the effective implementation of policy requirements, was generally inadequate. Almost all offices had evaluation as a focal point responsibility, but these focal points often lacked a clear mandate and the requisite financial and human resources. Only 14 per cent of the country offices have a full-time, dedicated monitoring and evaluation professional. Nine country offices had a unit dedicated to planning, monitoring and evaluation and/or results-management-related activities. Following regional workshops on evaluation policy, a number of country offices, including those of Angola, Sri Lanka and Sudan, were recruiting monitoring and evaluation professionals. A guidance note was developed on the roles and responsibilities of an evaluation officer to support the streamlining of the monitoring and evaluation function in country offices.

45. Evaluation resource requirements were often determined on an ad hoc basis, and the amounts allocated were generally insufficient for quality evaluations. However, some country offices adopted innovative solutions to finance outcome and other evaluations, including earmarked project funds, central resource pools and the use of general management funds for developing specific monitoring and evaluation projects. The evaluation policy stipulates that country offices define resource requirements consistently and identify sources of funding while developing the evaluation plan. Whenever possible, opportunities should be sought to cost-share evaluations with government, other United Nations organizations and donors.

Capacity development for UNDP staff

46. The Evaluation Office continued to provide guidance to other units on evaluation planning, the formulation of evaluation terms of reference, management of the commissioning process, development of management responses and follow-up. The Evaluation Office delivered sessions on evaluation periodically for more than 200 UNDP staff members across the organization. An online training course on evaluation is being developed to strengthen the culture of evaluation in the organization, particularly the use of evaluative evidence in the programming cycle. The

development of the training programme will benefit from ongoing work with UNEG in this area to ensure full alignment with the United Nations system-wide initiative.

Regional capacity

47. There is a need to enhance capacity at the regional level to support country offices in the region. Currently, the Regional Service Centre in the Europe and CIS region is the only one with a dedicated Evaluation Adviser, who has helped the establishment of a network of country office evaluation focal points in the Europe and CIS region for sharing knowledge, experience and expertise among the members. The first workshop for the network members was successfully held in Bucharest in March 2007. Other regional bureaux, particularly in the Arab States, demonstrated concrete commitment in establishing such a post.

Associated funds and programmes

48. UNCDF has one evaluation adviser, but no core budget. All evaluations are now funded directly from the projects to be evaluated. In 2006, given the staff reductions necessitated by the 2005 restructuring, UNCDF decided to pilot an outsourced arrangement for the conduct of mandatory evaluations. The outsourced arrangement would enable UNCDF to undertake a number of country-level evaluations almost simultaneously and to use a common evaluation framework and methodology. Such an approach is expected to optimize the relationship between efficiency and effectiveness in the management and conduct of UNCDF evaluations. A contract was signed with a selected company in January 2007 and a total of 13 project evaluations are to be undertaken in two phases. This arrangement will be subject to careful assessment in early 2008.

49. Currently, the evaluation unit of UNIFEM at Headquarters has one staff member who manages the evaluations commissioned by the unit, coordinates the formulation of the annual evaluation plan, and provides guidance to other UNIFEM units in planning and commissioning their evaluations. To strengthen its evaluation function, UNIFEM has created a full-time evaluation adviser position, which will be filled in 2007. UNIFEM plans to provide for a central fund for evaluation, beginning with its strategic plan, 2008-2011, in addition to the evaluation budgets built into core and non-core funded programmes.

50. The UNV Evaluation Unit operates with three professional and one general service staff. The budget allocated to UNV corporate evaluation activities amounted to $108,090 in 2006; the expenditure to date was $101,250.

H. National evaluation capacity development

51. UNDP supports national capacity development within the framework established by United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/59/250 of December 2004 and the UNDP evaluation policy, which states that evaluation should be conducted in such a manner so as to assist governments in the development of national evaluation capacities. In the conduct of evaluation, the Evaluation Office seeks to engage a large number of institutions or consultants from the South while also drawing heavily from the pool of experts in the countries in which evaluations are conducted. The country-led evaluation in South Africa represents a model in which UNEG will collaborate with national institutions with responsibility for evaluation.

52. The Evaluation Office has supported evaluation associations to enhance the evaluation institutional capacity in partner countries. As part of the Fourth African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) conference, it supported a pre-conference workshop for leaders of the African national evaluation associations with the aim of advancing evaluation in the African development agenda through the exchange of innovative ideas. UNIFEM supported the participation of the Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network at the AfrEA conference.

53. Participants at the regional workshops on the evaluation policy emphasized the need for the development of national evaluation capacity and the national ownership of evaluation. It was recommended that, where evaluation is nascent, UNDP should play an advocacy role, providing a good basis for strengthening government demand for evaluation and for increasing the public interest in evaluation. Where there is demand and appropriate internal capacity, UNDP should support national capacity development in evaluation through the programmatic work of country offices.

54. UNDP support in evaluation capacity development at the country level has concentrated on providing governmental and non-governmental agencies with training and technical assistance to monitor poverty trends, conduct monitoring and evaluation for their projects and programmes, improve national statistical services and formulate monitoring and evaluation systems. In Viet Nam, UNDP supported national monitoring and evaluation capacity development with the national programme for poverty reduction in ethnic minority areas. UNDP in Brazil supported the national effort to build an evaluation culture inside the Ministry of Education through the provision of training and technical assistance. In Indonesia and Somalia, UNDP developed projects to enhance the capacity of national counterparts in project design, management and monitoring, including the certification of government officers who had been trained in project management methodology. Others contributed to evaluation capacity development by building partnerships with other players in this area such as national universities, research centres, evaluation networks and civil society organizations. In Niger, for instance, UNDP, in collaboration with UNICEF, continued to support the Niger evaluation association, resulting in its leadership role as a host of the recent AfrEA conference.

II. Key findings and lessons learned from the evaluations

55. This chapter presents a synthesis of key findings and lessons derived from the evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office and from those conducted by the associated funds and programmes. The findings are intended to present evidence on UNDP performance, and also to provide a basis for highlighting key issues to be addressed at the corporate and programmatic levels.

A. UNDP role and comparative advantage

56. The comparative advantage for UNDP lies in its convening power. UNDP is perceived as a trusted development partner, an impartial arbiter and facilitator. Its mandate as a coordinator for the United Nations and its ability to engage in sensitive areas allows the organization to congregate various partners. The evaluations showed that when UNDP capitalizes on its comparative advantage, the organization succeeds in strategically positioning itself while maximizing the impact of its contributions to development effectiveness.

57. The ability of UNDP to play effective roles often hinges on the level of support provided by the partner government. Being a resident agency, UNDP generally has a strategic advantage over others and enjoys a favourable relationship with the government. The majority of ADRs highlighted the ability of UNDP to capitalize on the positive relationship with the government and engage in sensitive areas such as legal-sector reform and the placing of human development and human rights at the centre of the national development agenda.

Aid effectiveness

58. Given the increasing emphasis on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the UNDP role as a coordinator of the United Nations system at the country level has been perceived as highly

valuable and effective. Evaluations revealed that UNDP in many countries facilitated greater donor coordination and harmonization with government priorities, resulting in improved aid effectiveness and better targeting of official development assistance (ODA). Examples of where this happened include Bhutan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Nicaragua. In all cases, UNDP co-chaired the round-table meetings with government and managed consultations among government and development partners on sensitive issues and development themes.

Mediator

59. The perceived neutrality of the resident coordinator/resident representative has led to the assumption, by UNDP, of an important role as a mediator between donors and government when problems arise. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the role played by the UNDP through the resident coordinator/resident representative's function was critical in government-donor negotiations to find acceptable management and monitoring systems for the unexploded ordnance and the national HIV/AIDS programmes, which restored donor confidence and ensured that these programmes received adequate funding.

Facilitator

60. In Colombia, UNDP demonstrated considerable leadership in its coordinating role to facilitate the G-24 London-Cartagena forum. Through this venue, the Government of Colombia, together with the international community and civil society organizations, created a development agenda prioritizing issues that are critical for the country's development and peace processes. The forum provided a unique platform for dialogue among various social actors, allowing, among other things, a more fluent interaction between civil society organizations, the national government and international cooperation agencies.

Fund manager

61. Trust and respect among the spectrum of national stakeholders often provided the avenue for UNDP to help establish and manage multi-donor trust funds for a whole range of purposes: paying salaries for the police in Afghanistan and the border protection service in Tajikistan, supporting the reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons in Somalia and, of course, electoral administrations in a number of countries.

Responsiveness

62. UNDP operates in countries with a wide range of economic and political conditions in a rapidly changing world. The ADRs in Montenegro and Serbia questioned whether UNDP would have a role to play in these countries in the near future. Given the growing number of countries that are likely to achieve European Union membership in the CIS region, the UNDP programme countries in the region could achieve net contributor country status within a reasonably short period of time. Although it is necessary to rationalize the ongoing presence and role of UNDP in such situations, operations in the region are expensive relative to those in other regions of the world, where scarce UNDP resources and talent may be better deployed. The evaluations highlighted a need for UNDP to analyse critically the changing environment and determine the organization's future role. UNDP should also develop a formal policy in these countries to tailor its country programmes to meeting new demands and to determine the nature of its relationship to host governments, the European Union and other participating donors.

Funds and programmes

63. UNV evaluations in Latin America demonstrated the importance of the United Nations "brand" and multi-faceted structure in fostering wider cooperation between developing countries and regions, particularly in the area of volunteerism. Partners of UNIFEM acknowledged the added

value of collaborating with UNIFEM to open spaces for dialogue with policymakers in the government. The comparative advantage of UNIFEM as the recognized lead agency in advancing women's rights and gender equality lends credibility and visibility to its programmes.

B. Resource limitations and the ability of UNDP to remain strategic and focused

64. The evaluations revealed that limitations in core resources and the lack of predictability of resources sometimes led UNDP to becoming unfocused, inhibiting its substantive contributions to development effectiveness within the core mandate. The evidence from the evaluation of UNDP assistance to conflict-affected countries and its six country studies suggests that the organization's increasing dependence on non-core, earmarked resources for its activities in conflict-affected countries has resulted in growing concern with the needs of various donors and resource-mobilization endeavours. This led UNDP to play an increasing role in filling gaps that other organizations were unable or unwilling to fill. The ADR Colombia revealed similar issues. Resident in a middle-income country, UNDP in Colombia receives limited core funding. In an effort to sustain the operation of the office and meet emerging challenges in the country, UNDP generated additional operational income through development support services, services that were largely administrative and that included activities such as procurement and the management of payrolls.

65. The evaluations concluded that the UNDP role of filling gaps was generally valuable because it ensured that critical functions of an administrative nature were managed for the benefit of the international community. However, they also highlighted the downside. First, it is often difficult to measure the direct contributions of administrative support activities to development results within the core mandate of UNDP. This reactive approach is likely to divert UNDP from its core development mandate, potentially undermining the ability of the organization to be relevant, effective and strategic within its mandated areas. In addition, UNDP may be spreading its efforts too thinly over too many projects and activities, consequently reducing the overall effectiveness of its interventions and constraining its core capacity for substantive development work. Moreover, in the case of Colombia, the evaluation indicated that over-concentration on development support services poses a risk to the reputation of UNDP and raises questions about its business model. To ensure substantive contributions to development effectiveness in its core areas, UNDP needs to formulate a strategy to reduce its dependency on non-core resources and enhance its ability to provide substantive support.

C. Internal capacity constraints of UNDP

66. The evidence from the evaluation of the UNDP contribution to conflict-affected countries demonstrated shortcomings in the organization's ability to respond to emerging demands on the ground. Due to the increasing volume of administrative support provided by UNDP, more staff members are engaged in operational and procurement functions as opposed to technical and advisory services in core areas of development. In conflict situations, UNDP needs enhanced substantive capacity within the mandate of the organization, particularly in governance, recovery and reintegration of war-affected populations, justice and security reform, poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods. In immediate post-conflict scenarios, UNDP should enhance surge capacity to respond promptly to emerging needs.

67. Evaluations pointed to the need for updating the UNDP staffing policy to recruit staff with specialized skills in addition to generalist managers. Doing so would allow the organization to play a more substantive role. The evaluations highlighted the increasingly pressing need for the organization to address problems in the recruitment and, most importantly, the retention of experienced and highly qualified staff by providing sufficient incentives and staff development opportunities. The high turnover rate of international staff, as a result of ad hoc hiring on short-term

contracts, is not only costly to the organization but also minimizes the effectiveness of UNDP support.

D. Engagement with local and national capacities

68. Evaluations revealed that UNDP often faces difficulty in effectively engaging local and national capacities. Particularly in crises, local capacity is key to saving lives and improving people's resilience to crisis, as local groups are best informed about the local situation and the first ones to respond to crisis. However, the organization pays insufficient attention to existing local knowledge, actors in civil society and gender issues in shaping its interventions and policy responses in the post-crisis context.

69. The evaluations recommended that UNDP make more concerted efforts to strengthen partnerships not only with the government but also with knowledgeable local intermediaries with power to influence decisions. For this, the evaluations stressed the need for UNDP to develop an appropriate strategy with local actors before engaging in any form of partnership.

70. It was found that the ability of UNDP to identify local capacities and means to include actors meaningfully in planning and decision-making was generally weak. The joint evaluation of the impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities attributed the inappropriate and ineffective response to limited local knowledge and language skills among international development workers, including UNDP staff. There is also the heavy reliance on short-term consultants who lack an institutional memory and understanding of local contexts and actors. In working with local actors, UNDP often lacks a proper capacity assessment of these partners, particularly, local governments and community-based organizations. In some cases, the local implementing partners are given the responsibility of managing a project without sufficient human resources or accounting systems in place. Evaluations recommended that where shortfalls in local capacity exist, UNDP should systematically incorporate capacity-building activities for partners in planning and project management.

71. The capacity-building of local actors is critical for the sustainability of interventions and results. UNDP projects seldom have exit strategies that incorporate capacity-building mechanisms at the project design and implementation stages. For instance, the evaluations concluded that project management or implementation units (PMUs/PIUs) do not promote ownership or long-term sustainability. They risk crowding out the existing local capacity by creating an artificial entity that focuses on time-bound project delivery. In the case of the capacity development programme supported by UNDP Montenegro, the PMU resided in the UNDP offices and was staffed by UNDP resources. Consequently, the programme was perceived to be more a UNDP programme than a government programme. Similarly, the ADR in the Laos People's Democratic Republic showed that advisers were used in some cases to substitute for local capacity in the organization in which they were working. Instead of supporting a counterpart, the adviser undertook the work. Such a scenario should be avoided as it is unlikely to lead to a sustainable institutional capacity. Evaluations recommended that UNDP focus on building broad-based national ownership through sustainable institutional development and strategic partnerships with existing capacities.

72. In contrast, the ADR in Serbia presented a positive example in which UNDP worked effectively with civil society and contributed to the stabilization of peace in southern Serbia. As part of a United Nations inter-agency mission in 2001, UNDP responded to a crisis resulting from ethnic conflict in southern Serbia. To overcome poor governance, considered to be one of the root causes of conflict, UNDP used innovative approaches to draw local governmental and non-governmental actors into decision-making. This case demonstrates that stability and peace can be nurtured by responding quickly, developing and implementing sound programmes, effectively mobilizing

resources and building local partnerships. Furthermore, UNDP can play a significant role in bringing change and innovation to local institutions. For this to take place, the evaluations indicated that UNDP requires adequate in-house capacity through appropriate staffing, a proper partnership strategy, thorough capacity assessments, and capacity-building mechanisms to meaningfully engage national and local capacities in UNDP interventions.

73. Similarly, the UNV and UNIFEM evaluations and reviews presented sustained results yielded as a result of effective partnerships with local actors. Volunteerism has been a driving force, and, again, the 2006 series of UNV evaluations has shown that UNV volunteers have been very effective actors in linking the grassroots-level community work with higher-level United Nations development and policymaking. Examples from UNIFEM evaluations include successful contributions made through advocacy by women's groups and NGOs for the passage of legislation on sexual offenses in Kenya, on domestic violence in India, and for the adoption of amendments to the law on land that ensures rural women's rights to own and use land plots in Kyrgyzstan.

E. Issues and challenges in programming

74. The evaluations reviewed for this report identified a number of issues and challenges pertaining to programming in UNDP and its associated funds and programmes.

Fragmentation

75. A common criticism contained in evaluations is the weak intersectoral and inter-project convergence and coordination. The linkages among projects, programmes and practice areas are often absent. UNDP projects are designed and operate as stand-alone interventions based on the project-level logic rather than around development outcomes and an overall strategic framework. The RCF evaluation in Africa revealed a weak linkage between the regional programme and country-level programmes managed by country offices in the region.

Weak upstream and downstream linkages

76. Ensuring development effectiveness requires both appropriate upstream and downstream interventions. The effectiveness of UNDP depends critically on its ability to leverage relatively small-scale interventions into sustained and scaled-up efforts that go beyond small pilot projects and influence policies and strategies at national levels. When UNDP capitalizes on opportunities to establish clear and robust policy-practice linkages, its effectiveness is enhanced. However, the evaluations continued to suggest that upstream and downstream work in UNDP was, in many cases, disconnected.

Poor results orientation

77. Many projects and programmes were developed without a well-defined results framework. They often lacked concrete baselines or measures of performance as well as other indicators needed to measure and assess performance of the overall projects or programme. Almost all evaluations identified the lack of monitoring and evaluation data as a severely limiting factor in evaluations. In addition, in the absence of internalized practices for monitoring and evaluation, there was no evidence-based feedback mechanism or knowledge management system to allow UNDP to learn from experience and improve its performance. These examples confirm that results-based management has not been appropriately internalized, and the potential for strategic management using results-based management has been underexploited.

78. Evaluations indicated that UNDP continued to focus on procedures and processes as opposed to development results. Among partners, UNDP was often perceived as an opaque and bureaucratic organization. While it is important to prioritize transparency and accountability, UNDP must seek a

fine balance between flexibility and strict adherence to UNDP rules and procedures. Delayed payments were one of many chronic administrative problems in UNDP country offices. This hampered the organization's effectiveness. Lack of clarity in required documentation for the purpose of taking administrative action also caused frustration among national counterparts. The ADR in Bhutan made a recommendation to UNDP headquarters to focus on the simplification of bureaucratic procedures to enhance overall efficiency.

III. Programme of work for the Evaluation Office for 2007-2008

79. In developing the proposed agenda, the Evaluation Office considered corporate priorities evidenced from investment patterns, outcomes reported and policy statements of the Administrator and Associate Administrator; emerging organizational practices and development priorities; issues emerging from past evaluations; programme areas not covered by recent evaluations; and consultations at the working level with headquarters units.

80. The programme of work 2007-2008 is as follows:

A. Ongoing evaluations

(a) South-South cooperation;
(b) Results-based management in UNDP;
(c) Energy and environment;
(d) The role of UNDP in the net contributor countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) of the Arab Region.

B. Proposed evaluations

(a) Global Cooperation Framework;
(b) Capacity development for democratic governance;
(c) 'One United Nations' pilots (joint evaluation with UNEG);
(d) The Paris Declaration (joint evaluation with partner countries and DAC);
(e) GEF Small Grants Programme (joint evaluation with the GEF Evaluation Office);
(f) The UN's Contribution to South Africa (joint evaluation with Government of South Africa and UNEG);
(g) ADRs in seven countries.

C. Enhancement of the evaluation function

(a) Update guidance, including the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation*;
(b) Enhance knowledge management, including EvalNet;
(c) Develop quality assurance, including standards for decentralized evaluations;
(d) Strengthen UNEG collaboration, including hosting the UNEG secretariat.

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Evaluation of the regional cooperation framework for Africa, 2002-2006*

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*The compilation of data required to provide the Executive Board with the most current information has delayed submission of the present report.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a summary of the findings of the independent evaluation of the regional cooperation framework (RCF) for Africa which the Evaluation Office submits to the Executive Board. The evaluation of the second RCF for Africa (2002-2006) was carried out between September 2006 and January 2007. The second RCF was originally approved for the period 2002-2006, but was extended to 2007 so that it could be harmonized with the cycle of the multi-year funding framework (MYFF) 2004-2007.

2. The main objectives of the evaluation were to: (a) assess the achievement of the intended organizational goals and development results, highlighting key results of outputs and outcomes, lessons learned and good practices, both as they relate to the specified programme goals of UNDP and in relation to broader national strategies in the region; (b) assess performance of the RCF and specify the development results achieved in the area of policy advice, capacity development and knowledge management within the core results areas on which the regional programme has focused, as well as assessment of the scope and range of strategic partnerships formed; (c) based on the actual results, ascertain how the RCF has contributed to positioning UNDP strategically to establish its comparative advantage or niche as a major upstream global policy advisor for poverty reduction and sustainable human development and as a knowledge-based organization in the region; and (d) identify innovative approaches used within the RCF programme and project portfolio, their related outcomes and lessons learned within UNDP and in programme countries. The evaluation sought to address key questions in terms of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the regional programme.

3. The RCF evaluations were to be conducted as a 'meta-evaluation', drawing on the results and conclusions of independent outcome evaluations undertaken during the period of the RCF for each of the regional programmes. The meta-evaluation methodology required a review and validation of findings and data from existing evaluations (such as a comprehensive desk review and analysis of outcome and project evaluations and other self-assessment reports); conducting selective spot checks (in-country project visits and consultations with RCF stakeholders on the ground, for example); and triangulation of the available data and information.

4. The outcome evaluations provided were found to be uneven in quality and inadequate in terms of their coverage of the second RCF for Africa. Nor did the evaluations capture programme-level results. As it was not possible to conduct the planned meta-evaluation, the results reported for a sample of projects were reviewed and the resulting outcomes assessed.

5. Key reports and reference documents for the RCF were reviewed, as were more than 100 other reports and related documents. RCF Africa II project documents were reviewed for 55 of the ongoing projects in the portfolio. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with a wide cross-section of stakeholders. These included representatives of African governments, regional and sub-regional organizations and NGOs; advisory board members, representatives of non-UNDP executing agencies, the UNDP regional service centre and sub-regional resource facilities (SURFs); UNDP staff in the field working on RCF initiatives, headquarters staff and in UNDP country office staff. Visits to these sites covered activities under the major thematic areas of the RCF – HIV/AIDS, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, gender and environment, governance and globalization. All projects valued over $4 million were also visited. In addition to the selected countries, visits were made to donor partners in

Brussels and London, and interviews were conducted in Canada with the Canadian International Development Agency.

II. Main findings

A. Relevance

6. The evaluation found that the themes of the RCF Africa (2002-2006) are relevant to the needs and development priorities of the region and to the issues that African leaders have identified in the NEPAD as critical for the region's development – good governance, economic development, conflict prevention and peace building. The themes of the RCF also address problems with trans-boundary implications, in which joint action and greater regional integration and coordination can add value. It is also aligned with the strategic goals of the UNDP MYFF, 2004-2007, particularly in the areas of poverty reduction and democratic governance, but also in crisis prevention and gender mainstreaming and to a lesser extent in the environment. The evaluation also found that the thematic areas of support for the RCF are in line with the global programme principles and its practice areas. The second RCF for Africa is working in areas – democratic governance, globalization and conflict resolution/peace building – in which UNDP's presence throughout Africa, along with its reputation and stature, gives it a natural and viable role to play, and the RCF initiatives are having policy and advocacy impacts.

B. Effectiveness

7. The evaluation looked at the effectiveness of RCF in terms of organizational goals, institutional criteria and approaches, such as policy advice and advocacy, support to the MDGs, communication, coordination and building capacity, partnerships and synergies; and in terms of the developmental results of the themes: democratization and participatory governance, globalization, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and disaster preparedness, HIV/AIDS, and 'other', which includes the cross-cutting themes of gender and environment as well as energy and water resources.

8. Capitalizing on the reputation of UNDP as politically neutral, the RCF was successful in supporting dialogues and exchanges on sensitive issues and in a very timely fashion. In addition, the programme has supported analysis and advocacy-level activities through a variety of initiatives such as studies, regional workshops and conferences on various issues, including conflict management, public sector ethics, reinventing government in Africa, and human rights, as well as promoting improved human development reports. Those activities were very valuable in bringing partners from throughout Africa together to share best practices and lessons learned. The forums helped to build relationships and confidence between groups and permit the development of joint plans of action to address transboundary issues. This was particularly true for countries that otherwise have little access to official development assistance resources or have a long history of not interacting with one another. In some cases periodic follow-up meetings resulted in peer pressure to either participate or progress, and at times the events were catalysts for further action (such as the Regional Centre for Small Arms workshop for police, military and customs officers responsible for enforcing laws to prevent the proliferation and cross-border movement of small arms in the Great Lakes region).

9. The RCF identifies capacity development as the 'lens' through which African development issues are perceived, and measures to address them are formulated

and implemented in the RCF. Although it endorses effective capacity development principles and practices, including the recognition that capacity development is a long-term process, the RCF has only a four- or five-year horizon, and many of its initiatives of short duration. The institutional development support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), for example, was approved for a period of 14 months. Although that was extended for an additional year, this sort of short-term support is contrary to stated UNDP capacity development principles. In another case, the addition of small arms control to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), UNDP did not carry out a proper assessment of the capacity, mandate or priorities of the institution prior to implementation – another precondition to effective capacity development.

10. Through its support at the regional level, UNDP worked in partnership with over 15 regional organizations and entities, including intergovernmental bodies and civil society groups such as the Africa 2000 Network, the African Futures Institute, the African Leadership Forum, ECOWAS, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). They included some of the key African institutions and initiatives such as the African Union, NEPAD, and the African Peer Review Mechanism. UNDP worked with several international development partners, including the Department for International Development, CIDA, Belgium, the European Union and Japan), and mobilized resources from a variety of development partners, raising $74.1 million.

11. The evaluation team found that RBA operated on two parallel tracks, with very little coordination or communication between country programmes and regional programmes. The RCF and its individual projects were seen as emanating from UNDP headquarters, and neither the countries nor the country offices understood how to access regional programmes or resources in order to participate or conduct complementary activities. The lack of communication between the regional programme and country offices has made it difficult for country offices to coordinate the regional projects with their in-country programming. It has also limited the ability of UNDP to leverage its reputation and knowledge base in promoting development policy with other donors and with country governments.

12. The effectiveness of the RCF in attaining intended development results was mixed, and the level of the programme contribution to those results is impossible to assess with rigour due to the lack of indicators of achievement and the lack of baseline and timeline data. Without agreed indicators of programme achievements, reporting is not uniform, and meaningful aggregations at the programme level are impossible. There are clear indications that the initiatives supported by the RCF are contributing to the achievement of desired programme-level results in the 'strengthening democratic and participatory governance' thematic area. Overall, progress in Africa has been in the desired direction during the life of the RCF, with the African Peer Review Mechanism – among others – promoting improved accountability; capacity-building efforts with the African Union improving the effectiveness of democratic systems; and the African Governance Forum promoting more effective participation of civil society. However, it is difficult to discern the level of the RCF contribution. For example, while more countries have democratically elected governments and the Forum of Former African Heads of State – which is supported under the RCF – is working to promote and consolidate democratic governance in Africa, it is not easy to establish a causal link between the two, since the Forum of Former African Heads of State constitutes only one influence on the progress toward greater democratic governance in Africa.

13. Objectives under the globalization theme included strengthening regional and subregional economic cooperation and integration in the areas of trade, market and

enterprise development; and strengthening pro-poor economic governance and public finance management. As with that for democracy and governance, general progress is in the right direction, but again attribution to the RCF poses problems, since the improved economic performance of Africa over the past five years is the result of many influences. Nonetheless, the RCF was praised for the flexible and responsive support it provided to African ministers and African World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiators in Geneva preparing for WTO meetings, as well as for support to SADC and the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (creating an enabling environment for greater economic development in West and Central African states through training on regional and global trade regimes). The capacity development work with African partners in government, regional institutions and the civil and private sectors helped bring Africa into the world economy and lessen its marginalization, for example through supporting studies related to mobility of business persons, trade and investment, as well as policy development work with African government institutions.

14. In spite of ongoing and emerging challenges, the RCF is contributing directly to African efforts to prevent conflicts and build peace. There are good indications that RCF Africa II is on track to achieve the desired results at the outcome level, through support to ECOWAS and the Regional Centre on Small Arms Control, as well as by training faculty members in the region on conflict analysis, mediation, and negotiation. While the institutions supported by the RCF are also supported by others, several found RCF support important. For example, the Peace and Security Directorate of the African Union found the funding of analysts, who are the focal points for providing up-to-date information and analysis on conflict situations to the African Union, and the funding of special envoys to ensure that African Union member states ratified the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in July 2002, were critical in moving operations forward to the point where African Union peacekeepers could be fielded.

15. Several initiatives have been funded under the RCF, although the data available do not demonstrate any outcome level results as yet for some of them. It is also difficult to differentiate the results of the regional programme from those of the country offices and other specialized United Nations agencies, the World Health Organization and UNAIDS, as well as a plethora of projects and programmes addressing HIV/AIDS at all levels, funded by virtually every bilateral and multilateral organization. Following an evaluation that found that "there was no chance that the project would produce the outputs", the South Africa Capacity Initiative – one of the key HIV/AIDS interventions under RCF Africa II – is now addressing government capacity-building more generally rather than solely for HIV/AIDS.

16. Most projects report giving consideration to gender balance in selecting project participants and/or beneficiaries but, in general, there is little analysis of gender concerns and challenges in project documents. There is no outline of the specific roles and responsibilities of men and women, boys and girls, nor any indication of how resources will be allocated to facilitate the participation of the various groups. In addition, while quite often noting that women's participation will be supported, project documents rarely set specific targets or strategies to achieve this, and gender disaggregated data are rarely available. In those instances in which a regional activity is based in an existing institution, there is no indication of an assessment of the capacity of that institution to deliver a gender-focused programme or activity.

17. Integration of environmental concerns is weak. With the exception of the initial undertaking to mainstream environmental concerns, the documents reviewed appear to be more or less silent on this issue. Energy and water resources were added during the reorientation of RCF Africa II in 2004. RCF has supported the

development of an ECOWAS regional white paper on increasing access to energy for rural and peri-urban populations, which has been ratified by the member states. The document is being used to engage financing and donor interest and the member states have approved guidelines on the development of MDG-based energy access strategies and costing methodologies. These are being piloted, but it is too early to see outcomes as yet.

C. Efficiency

18. Efficiency was measured by looking at programme oversight and governance, including resource mobilization, organizational strategy, execution and implementation modalities, and performance measurement. While funds mobilization was successful, oversight, management, coordination and communications were weak. Accountability and reporting lines and decision-making authorities were unclear. Links between expected results, required resources and monitoring and evaluation systems were missing or weak. Reporting was highly variable and did not seem to be used for management and control. Use of policy advisors, including the advisory board, was limited. The external advisory board, established at the beginning of RCF Africa II in order to provide policy guidance and ensure that the programme remained "closely grounded in African priorities and emerging realities", met infrequently and was under-utilized. Members of the advisory board described their terms of reference as vague, and the board did not meet until after the parameters of RCF Africa II were finalized.

19. While overall resource mobilization was effective, financial management has not been. Financial information was not available to field managers on a timely basis, and the budget fluctuated, dropping by 25 per cent during the approval of the MYFF in 2004, and then increasing again in 2006, when the end date of the programme was extended. The uncertainties in financing created some implementation difficulties for initiatives on the ground, as budgets that had been approved were cut and later reinstated. Those uncertainties, compounded by the lack of timely financial information, made planning and results achievement difficult for the individual RCF Africa II initiatives. In addition, the evaluators were told that difficulties in obtaining financial and other information has led some bilateral donors to raise questions about the capacity of UNDP to be accountable and manage resources in an effective and timely fashion.

20. The RCF has a complex organization, with the Strategic and Regional Initiatives Unit (SRIU) of the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) acting as the key planner and manager of the programme. The programme is executed by 10 different organizations in partnership with over 15 African organizations, from project management sites in North America, Europe and 14 African countries. This may help to explain some of the difficulties in coordination and communication. Operating out of New York, SRIU carries out central management of the regional programme and makes essential decisions regarding project funding and operations. The regional projects and programmes are implemented by different implementing agencies. Roles and responsibilities are not completely clear: some project managers reported not being sure which decisions they could take themselves and which required approval from New York. Some reporting lines are also difficult to understand; for example, the Assistant Resident Representative/Representation to the African Union and Liaison Office with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) – both key partners – reports to the UNDP Resident Representative in Addis Ababa, who has no direct reporting relationship to SRIU. The Senior Regional Coordinator/Regional Support for

NEPAD, also based in Addis Ababa and the liaison with another important partner, on the other hand, reports directly to SRIU in New York.

21. Most regional programme coordinators state that although SURFs/regional service centres have provided and can continue to provide good technical advice, especially at the project planning stage, they rarely call upon them. This may be a function of the centralization of programme planning and management decision-making in New York. However, the Bureau for Development Policy also reports that SRIU does not consult them, including on key issues such as integrating gender and environment. Many key programme management functions, financial management, procurement, and administrative support are provided by UNOPS, which is the executing agency for most RCF initiatives. Field managers reported delays as long as six months in getting financial information from UNOPS, which UNOPS attributed to difficulties in implementing the Atlas system. In addition, the UNOPS chart of accounts is not particularly well set up for producing institutional-level financial management information and does not link well with those financial management information systems. This is not efficient, and several partners reported running duplicate systems in an attempt to ascertain their current financial position, or to link their RCF funding to their institutional financial management system.

22. While SRIU had created a results-oriented tracking system, performance measurement, review and reporting functions were found to be inadequate. At the time of this evaluation, there were multiple objectives for each theme but results were not usually measurable and indicators of achievement had not been developed. Without clear indicators of achievements, the reports generally provided activities and outputs against key results statements, but provided little information on outcomes or programme level results. The evaluation team noted a general absence of poverty and gender objectives in project documentation and, in line with the general absence of results-formulation and monitoring processes, did not find any established means to determine the extent and nature of the RCF contribution to poverty reduction or gender equality. No attempt was made to compare, compile or roll up the information in these reports to either the thematic or the programme level. As most individual project reporting and monitoring to date has focused on output rather than outcome achievements, it is not surprising that most project evaluations conducted to date have restricted themselves to evaluating project outputs, thereby limiting their usefulness for meta-evaluation purposes.

D. Sustainability

23. While the RCF has been successful in enhancing the capacity of many of the African organizations with which it works, the long-term sustainability of results for several initiatives is doubtful. In the case of the African Union and the Regional Centre on Small Arms, the availability of funds is central to sustaining the institutions and their regional programmes. In both cases, although the participating governments are making contributions to help support the institutions, those contributions are rarely sufficient to pay for capacity development and to allow the institutions to fulfil their regional mandate.

24. In some cases UNDP has created implementing partner institutions whose ability to continue to produce regional benefits once donor funding ends is questionable. For example, the Africa 2000 Network, a regional initiative, was transformed into a linked group of nationally registered NGOs, some of which have been successful in mobilizing funds from UNDP country offices and other donors, while others have not. The coordinating body for Africa 2000 is completely dependent on funds from the RCF, which end in 2007, and that

coordinating body is responsible for sharing lessons learned, conducting field visits, and collecting success stories. It is difficult to see how the regional links will be maintained following the end of RCF funding. The Africa 2000 coordinating body has been linked to Capacity 2015, another UNDP-funded initiative, in order to continue its activities, but this continued dependence is still is not a sustainability or an exit strategy. In general, sustainability and exit strategies are missing from RCF initiatives.

III. Conclusions and lessons learned

A. Conclusions

25. Outcome-level results are indicative rather than exhaustive, due to the lack of data and the somewhat short time-frame. While progress has been made toward all the objectives for RCF Africa II since its inception in 2002, projects within each development theme are dispersed geographically, chronologically and by executing agency. Consultations and anecdotal evidence indicate that the regional programme has contributed to key results within each thematic area; however, it is difficult to detect synergies or complementarities among them or to measure the aggregate development outcome for that theme objectively. However, in some cases there have been subsequent project phases that have built up to an outcome level result, such as 'capacity-building for trade and development'. In others, more than one initiative may have promoted a particular outcome, such as 'addressing small arms in the Great Lakes' and 'support to Peacebuilding in the Great Lakes'.

26. Working with and through regional institutions as partners has been a good model for producing synergies between partners and countries in the region. However, the short-term nature of the support provided by the RCF may not be appropriate for capacity development programming with young and fragile institutions that will require concentrated assistance for several years.

27. The performance of the RCF portfolio is stronger in the thematic areas that build on the core mandate of UNDP and its recognized strengths in policy, governance and conflict resolution, and less so in areas such as globalization, HIV/AIDS, and energy and water supply. Other United Nations agencies such as WHO and UNAIDS have better technical capacity on HIV/AIDS; the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development, WTO and the International Trade Centre have a better defined comparative advantage, technical skills and mandates than UNDP in globalization and trade capacity development; and the United Nations Capital Development Fund has skills in economic development programmes to reach the poor. Given scarce resources, including person hours and skills, greater focus of resources on areas where UNDP has a strong comparative advantage may result in a higher level of development impact.

28. Poor attention to internal monitoring and reporting on results undermines the ability of UNDP to leverage its reputation and knowledge base in promoting development policy with other donors and country governments. Weak monitoring and evaluation systems hamper the ability to assess the level of impact, including in relation to financial and other inputs.

29. The comparative advantage of the UNDP field presence is undermined by inadequate coordination between the regional programme (managed from New York) and the decentralized country offices, and also between RCF Africa and the

RCF for Arab States, which would be required to implement truly pan-African initiatives.

30. While flexibility is needed in order to continue to respond to emerging needs, a greater focus on selecting and working in partnership with key African institutions would enhance the performance and sustainability of results.

B. Lessons learned

31. *Focus.* RCF Africa II had a stronger impact, both developmentally and on institutional criteria like policy and advocacy, when it responded to the priorities of African stakeholders and built on the comparative strengths and advantages of UNDP. Maximum impact from relatively limited resources comes from focusing on the areas where African priorities and UNDP strengths intersect, such as in governance, conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

32. *Partnerships are difficult to develop; dependencies are not.* Building a partnership is easier by establishing a direct relationship with local institutions than by working through an executing agency. Capacity development requires a clear assessment of needs, followed by a plan to address those needs. Capacity-building takes time and a long-term commitment. Young and fragile institutions do not have the capacity to manage and mitigate the impact of fluctuating budget and development priorities, and will only develop that capacity through self-management, not by being managed by others.

33. *What gets measured gets done.* Responsibility for management cannot be delegated without strong financial and management systems and measures of performance, including an integrated system of reporting, monitoring and evaluation that fills both internal management and external reporting requirements. As initiatives were not required to develop and report on quantitative and qualitative gender-sensitive indicators of performance, integration of gender mainstreaming received only lip service. This is also true for environment, the other cross-cutting dimension.

34. *Weak monitoring and reporting*: *weak evaluation base.* An ex-post evaluation cannot fill the data gaps left by inadequate internal monitoring and reporting. Evaluations build on indicators of achievement, baseline data and continuous monitoring and measurement of progress. Meta-evaluations are only possible if existing evaluations are sufficient in number, coverage and quality.

IV. Recommendations

35. Based on the findings of the evaluation, the recommendations set out below are presented for consideration by RBA.

(a) *Maximize African ownership of the regional programme.* Greater use of the advisory board should be made, to ensure that the RCF has the capacity to identify and respond to evolving African development challenges and remains firmly anchored in African realities. This would help ensure that institutional and capacity development targets are being achieved. RBA should revise the terms of reference for the advisory board to ensure regular board meetings, and board members should be provided with regular reports on the progress of the framework against agreed gender-sensitive, quantitative and qualitative indicators and changes in the environment. Moreover, this flexibility must take place within the context of, rather than as a substitute for, a long-term strategic plan.

(b) *Streamline the focus* of the next RCF to a maximum of three clearly defined themes, with fewer outputs and outcomes under each theme. It should continue to focus on the regional priorities of strengthening democratic and participatory

governance, conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and disaster management. In addition, RCF resources should be concentrated on capacity-building for a smaller number of larger interventions, linked to existing regional African institutions. Many of the current programmes and activities should be phased out prior to the end of the second RCF. Decisions to allow current projects to be carried over into the next RCF implementation period need to be based on clear, consistent criteria, with a cap of project funding allowed for carry-over – suggested at 25 per cent of RCF total funding.

(c) *Improve coordination between regional and country programmes in Africa.* This can be achieved by decentralizing two regional Bureau Deputy Directors, with joint responsibility both for the RCF and UNDP country programmes, to locations in Africa. The regional programme in Africa needs to develop the capacity of regional and pan-African institutions to deliver their mandates. Partner institutions need to be provided with financial planning and management tools and training. Maximum responsibility should be transferred to them as a component of overall capacity development and institutional strengthening.

(d) *Enhance pan-African synergies through improved information sharing and enhanced cooperation between RBA and the Regional Bureau for the Arab States.* Establish a joint UNDP-Africa and Arab States representative office in Addis Ababa for respective accreditation to pan-African institutions such as the African Union and ECA. This would facilitate the participation of North African countries in pan-African activities.

(e) *Incorporate gender equality and environment across all interventions.* Both should be required in the planning and formulation of future initiatives. Sufficient financial resources for gender mainstreaming and environmental sustainability (in every project) should be allocated for all future projects if gender and environment are to be integrated as cross-cutting themes.

(f) *Clarify roles, responsibilities, accountability and reporting structures* to implement results-based management effectively. The RCF should adopt an enhanced results-based performance management, measurement and reporting system. Similar performance measurement frameworks, including clear programme-level indicators of achievement, should be developed at the thematic and RCF levels. Project-level reports should be rolled up into thematic and regional programme-level reports, at a minimum annually, for presentation to the advisory board.

(g) *Include in project budgets funds explicitly earmarked for monitoring systems,* including development of indicators, baseline data, data sources and collection methods, as well as responsibility and timing of collection for the outcomes and impact levels.

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Management response to the evaluation of the second regional cooperation framework for Africa, 2002-2006*

Context, background and findings

1. The present document constitutes the response of UNDP management to the report of the independent evaluation of the UNDP second regional cooperation framework for Africa, 2002-2006. The framework was approved by the UNDP Executive Board at its first regular session in January 2002, and was subsequently extended for one year through 2007 in order to synchronize it with the corporate multi-year funding framework (MYFF), 2004-2007. The evaluation was commissioned by the UNDP Evaluation Office to assess the overall programme performance and outcomes of the second regional cooperation framework. A meta-evaluation of the framework assessed its strategic position, achievement of intended goals and results, performance with respect to policy advice, knowledge management and capacity development activities, synergies and partnerships.

2. The final draft evaluation report was structured around the customary evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The findings of the draft evaluation have provided useful inputs towards the formulation of the third regional cooperation framework for Africa (2008-2011).

3. Management was pleased to note the overall evaluation findings that: (a) the second regional cooperation framework for Africa maintained its relevance by being closely aligned to the development priorities of Africa and to the issues that the African leaders and peoples have identified within the framework of African Union, New Partnership for Africa's Development and Africa Peer Review Mechanism as critical for the development of the region – good governance, higher levels of shared economic growth and development, gender equity, peace-building,

* The compilation of data required to provide the Executive Board with the most current information has delayed submission of the present document.

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recovery and conflict prevention as well as making globalization work for the continent; (b) the deliberate efforts made to address these development issues, all of which have transboundary implications, through the platform of regional public goods, in which joint/or collective action and greater regional cooperation can add value and are particularly suited to the African context; and (c) provision of strong support to efforts of African countries and their development partners at accelerating the pace of progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

4. Management was satisfied to note from the findings of the Evaluation that the Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Africa reinforced the foundations for responding more successfully to emerging issues such as the delivery of energy services for the poor, to the adverse development impacts of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, particularly on the capacities in the countries and the need for more vigorous efforts at sustainable environmental management. Management was also satisfied with the conclusion of the Evaluation that the regional cooperation framework made significant contribution to strategic partnership building, knowledge sharing and exchange of best practices among the stakeholders, which facilitated dialogue and confidence building among the policymakers and practitioners as well as development of joint plans of actions for addressing transboundary development issues.

5. Equally, UNDP management has taken serious note of the issues raised by the independent evaluation. In the annex to the present document, following the standard template, management presents detailed responses to each of the recommendations and the key issues raised, and proposes concrete follow-up actions with time frames and responsible units.

Annex
Evaluation of the Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Africa, 2002-2006
(April 2007)

Evaluation key issue Selection of thematic areas should be based on the following criteria: (a) UNDP has a comparative advantage; (b) African priorities as identified by key regional institutions such as the African Union, NEPAD and APRM; (c) Links to UNDP mandate and objectives including MDGs, the strategic plan and UNDP global and country programmes; and (d) Issues have trans-border or international dimensions or are more likely to progress if removed from the domestic context.[1]		
Management response: The selection of the focus areas under RCF II for Africa was informed by these considerations. Particular attention is being paid in the preparation of RCF III to adhere to the principles of UNDP comparative advantage and mandate; Africa's development priorities as identified by the regional institutions, Governments, CSOs and other key stakeholders; UNDP strategic plan and priorities, including MDGs; and the concept of regional public goods and transboundary initiatives in the selection of possible thematic focus areas under RCF III.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
(a) The preparation of RCF III, which is ongoing, is based on all the principles and considerations recommended for the selection of the thematic focus areas. (b) RCF III is being prepared through a participatory consultative process, involving UNDP units and all key stake-holders, notably Governments, regional and sub-regional institutions, CSOs, private sector and external partners. (c) The corporate guidelines for the preparation of regional programmes are also being strictly adhered to.	September 2006 – June 15, 2007	Office of the RBA Director and Strategic and Regional Initiatives Unit (SRIU)/Policy and Strategy Division.
Evaluation recommendation 1 *Maximize African ownership of the regional programme.* Greater use of the Advisory Board should be made, to ensure that RCF has the capacity to identify and respond to evolving African development challenges while firmly anchored in African realities. This would help ensure that institutional and capacity development targets are being achieved. RBA should revise the terms of reference for the Advisory Board to ensure regular Board meetings, and the Board should be provided with regular reports on the progress of the framework against agreed gender-sensitive, quantitative and qualitative indicators and changes in the environment. This flexibility must take place within the context of, rather than replace, a long-term strategic plan.		
Management response UNDP concurs with the recommendation to strengthen oversight of RCF implementation and ensure effective African ownership of the regional programme. A		

[1] See also, Evaluation of UNDP regional cooperation framework for Arab States (2002-2005), p. 51

pre-condition is a well-functioning Advisory Board representative of the key stakeholders and comprised of experienced development experts and practitioners.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
1.1. Advisory Board for the regional programme has been reconstituted, with revised terms of reference.	2008-2011: Reconstituted Advisory Board established in December 2006.	Office of the RBA Director and SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division.
1.2. Advisory Board will meet regularly and systematically, at least twice a year.	Inaugural formal, face-to-face meeting scheduled for end-May/ early June 2007. Regular meetings and consultations will be maintained thereafter.	Office of the RBA Director and SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division.
1.3. Comprehensive status reports on the implementation of the regional programme will be prepared and presented systematically to the Advisory Board for review and strategic guidance.	Consultations have been taking place with members since February 2007.	Office of the RBA Director and SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division.
1.4. Advisory Board will closely monitor the implementation of the regional programme, ensuring its continuing adherence to the indicators cited above as well as its relevance to the development priorities of Africa.	Consultations have been taking place with members since February 2007.	Office of the RBA Director and SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division.
Evaluation recommendation 2 *Streamline the focus* of the next RCF to a maximum of three clearly defined themes with fewer outputs and outcomes under each. RCF should focus on regional priorities of strengthening democratic and participatory governance; conflict prevention; peacebuilding; and disaster management. RCF resources should be concentrated on capacity-building for a smaller number of larger interventions, linked to existing regional African institutions. Many current programmes and activities should be phased out prior to the end of the second RCF. Decisions to allow current projects to be carried over into the next RCF implementation period need to be based on clear, consistent criteria, with a cap of project funding allowed for carry-over – suggested at 25 per cent of RCF total funding.		
Management response (a) Management concurs that sharper focus of the regional programme will contribute significantly to its effectiveness, impact and sustainability. (b) Related to the issue of focus is the emphasis on fewer, potentially higher impacting larger interventions as opposed to the situation under RCF II. (c) There will be a systematic but orderly phasing-out of RCF II projects and programmes. (d) The recommendation for a 25 per cent cap on the project funding to be allowed for carry-over into RCF III is acceptable. (e) The proposed focus areas for RCF III are broadly those recommended by the evaluation team: MDGs; reinforcement of participatory democracy and good governance initiatives in Africa; conflict prevention and recovery; pro-poor growth; poverty reduction; gender equality; and environmental sustainability.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
2.1 Four major focus areas have been proposed for RCF III, which is deemed to be optimal.	Approval of the proposed areas by the RBA Directorate, after endorsement by the Advisory Board, is due in June 2007.	Office of the RBA Director and SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division/Country Operations Divisions.

	Strategic framework for RCF III preparation, ready July 2006. Final decision on RCF III focus areas to be taken in June 2007.	
2.2 RCF III projects will incorporate clear exit strategies, and carry-over of RCF II projects is based on criteria embedded in the strategic framework for the preparation of RCF III.	Criteria for determining which projects to carry over into RCF III from RCF II has been determined and is being applied.	Office of the RBA Director and SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division/Country Operations Divisions.
2.3 Further decentralization of the management of regional programmes from New York.		Office of the RBA Director and SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division/Country Operations Divisions.
2.4 Only broad oversight functions to be maintained in New York.		Office of the RBA Director and SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division/Country Operations Divisions.
2.5 Outposting of Country Operations Department to the regional service centres.		Office of the RBA Director and SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division/Country Operations Divisions.

Evaluation recommendation 3

Improve coordination between regional and country programmes in Africa. This can be achieved by decentralizing two regional Bureau Deputy Directors, with joint responsibility both for the regional programme and country programmes, to locations in Africa.[2]. The regional programme in Africa should develop the capacity of regional and pan-African institutions to deliver their mandates. Partner institutions should be provided with financial planning/management tools and training. Consistent with overall UNDP financial management policies and regulations, maximum responsibility c should be transferred to them as a component of overall capacity development and institutional strengthening.

Management response

(a) Better coordination between regional and country programmes will be facilitated through the decentralization planned under the new RBA strategy for the management of regional programmes in the field and the outposting of the country operations divisions from New York to the regional service centres.
(b) Better synergy between the regional programme and country programmes should to be achieved by assigning responsibility for the oversight of regional programmes to offices in the outposted country operations divisions.
(c) All the implementing partners for regional programme projects will be familiarized with, and their staff trained in, the financial management, procurement and operational rules and regulations of UNDP.
(d) The maximum allowable autonomy under overall UNDP financial management policies and regulations will be accorded them.
(e) Management is committed to a closer working relationship with the Regional Bureau for the Arab States (RBAS), starting with close involvement of RBAS in the formulation of RCF III and implementation and monitoring of the supporting projects and programmes.

Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
3.1 Implementation of the RBA restructuring strategy, and/or decentralization of the direct oversight/management of regional programmes to the regional service centres.	2008-2011 RBA Restructuring is expected to kick in by July 2007.	Office of RBA Director/Policy and Strategy Divisions/Country Operations Divisions.
3.2 Management of the regional projects will be assigned to	October – December 2007	Office of RBA Director/Policy and Strategy

[2] Proposed as part of the RBA management structure reform in the strategy and management review, New York, May 2006.

Deputy Directors, Country Operations Divisions. This is expected to ensure the closer linkages and synergies between the regional projects and country programmes.		Divisions/Country Operations Divisions.
3.3. Sensitization and training of concerned staff of all the implementing partners of the RCF III supporting projects and programmes will be organized before implementation of the Regional Programme commences.	2008 -2011	Office of RBA Director/Policy and Strategy Divisions/Country Operations Divisions.
3.4 Training and exposure of staff of implementing partners will facilitate granting of more autonomy to them in the execution of the projects.	July 2007 and thereafter continuous	Office of RBA Director/Policy and Strategy Divisions/Country Operations Divisions.
Evaluation Recommendation 4: *Enhance pan-African synergies through improved information sharing and enhanced cooperation between the regional bureaus of Africa and the Arab States.* Establish a joint UNDP Africa and Arab States representative office in Addis Ababa for respective accreditation to pan-African institutions, such as AU and ECA. This would facilitate the participation of North African countries in pan-African activities.		
Management Response: The UNDP Representation Office with AU and Liaison Office with ECA in Addis Ababa is being revitalized. UNDP and ECA have signed a new Partnership MOU and Compact, whose effective implementation, will facilitate joint activities with Pan African Institutions as well as cooperation with North African countries. The UNDP Partnership Agreements/MOUs with the African Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank will also facilitate joint work with regional institutions and cooperation with RBAS countries. Using the framework of the new RBA Strategy for Capacity Development, the RCF III will make a more systematic contribution to the long-term and more effective capacity development of regional and sub-regional institutions in Africa, that will allow them to deliver more effectively on their mandates.		
Key Action(s)	**Time Frame**	**Responsible Unit(s)**
4.1. Regular coordinating arrangements with RBAS to be instituted.	July 2007	RBA/RBAS/BRSP
4.2 The new Head of the UNDP Representation and Liaison Office in Addis Ababa to be appointed by June 2007.	Continuous	RBA/RBAS/BRSP
4.3 Implementation of the MOU with ECA will be stepped up.	Continuous to 2011	RBA/RBAS/BRSP
Evaluation Recommendation 5: *Incorporate gender equality and environment across all interventions.* Both should be required in the planning and formulation of initiatives for the future. Sufficient financial resources for gender mainstreaming and environmental sustainability (in each and every project) should be allocated for all future projects if gender and environment are to be integrated as cross-cutting themes.		
Management Response: RBA is cognizant of the need for a more effective gender mainstreaming in all development initiatives, including those supported by it.		

It has, therefore, already instituted a three-pronged approach to address this issue: with clearer policy, capacity development and resources dimensions.

The same approach applies to sustainable energy and environment issues.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)
5.1 Full implementation of the RBA strategy for effective mainstreaming of gender and environment.	October 2007 - 2011	Office Of RBA Director/Policy and Strategy Division/Country Operations Divisions

Evaluation Recommendation 6:
Clarify roles, responsibilities, accountability and reporting structures to effectively implement Results Based Management. The RCF should adopt an enhanced results based performance management, measurement and reporting system. Similar performance measurement frameworks, including clear programme level indicators of achievement, should be developed at the thematic and the RCF level. Project level reports should be rolled up into thematic and regional programme level reports at a minimum annually for presentation to the Advisory Board.

Management Response:
The planned restructuring of RBA will ensure a more effective and efficient management and implementation framework for the regional Programme, with clearer and less bureaucratic reporting lines.

The RCF III document does adopt a more results-based management and monitoring system, including regular reporting.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)
6.1 Institution of a more streamlined supervision, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the regional programmes as part of the RBA restructuring.	October 2007	

Evaluation Recommendation 7:
Include in project budgets funds explicitly ear-marked for monitoring systems, including the development of indicators, baseline data, data sources and collection methods as well as responsibility and timing of collection for the outcomes and impact levels.

Management Response:
The RBA Management is not only committed to a more rigorous monitoring of project implementation, but has also stipulated that at least 10% of each project funds should be earmarked for monitoring and evaluation activities.

Key Action(s)	Time Frame	Responsible Unit(s)
7.1 Allocation of adequate funds for project monitoring and evaluation.	October 2007 - 2011	SRIU/Policy and Strategy Division/Country Operations Divisions/Regional Service Centres.

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Evaluation of the regional cooperation framework for Asia and the Pacific, 2002-2006*

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I Background

1. The present report provides a summary of the findings of the independent evaluation of the second regional cooperation framework (RCF) for Asia and the Pacific, 2002-2006, which the Evaluation Office submits to the Executive Board. That evaluation was carried out between December 2006 and March 2007. The second RCF was originally approved for the period 2002-2006 but was extended to 2007 so that it could be harmonized with the cycle of the multi-year funding framework, 2004-2007.

2. The evaluation was designed to assess the overall programme performance and outcomes of the second RCF in Asia and the Pacific, covering its scope and range, policy advisory services, knowledge sharing and networking, and capacity development activities. The findings are intended to provide inputs to the design of the next RCF for the region. The evaluation was carried out in parallel with similar evaluations of the RCF programmes in other regions, namely, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

3. The evaluation of the second RCF in Asia and the Pacific is the one which most significantly builds on previous outcome evaluations and uses a meta-evaluation methodology. This has been possible because the three outcome evaluations – on the poverty, governance and HIV/AIDS clusters of projects – are of reasonably good quality and cover a fair part of the programme. Combined, the outcome evaluations, which focus on projects that have been completed, cover about half of the projects under the RCF (14 out of 30 projects). However, there has been no outcome evaluation dealing with the area 'fostering sub-regional cooperation'.

4. As part of the methodology, an evaluation framework was developed. The questions raised are grouped under the customary evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Impact could have been added to the list, but owing to time and resource limitations it was not possible to conduct genuine impact evaluations. In practice the evaluation framework was developed in close consultation with the other RCF evaluations, especially that in Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to facilitate comparisons.

5. The present evaluation builds on and supplements the three outcome evaluations and attempts to take their findings, conclusions and recommendations to a higher level. This entails an added emphasis on assessing the added value of such a regional programme in an Asian context – vis-à-vis the global and country programmes UNDP – as well as an emphasis on determining the role of the programme in strategically positioning the UNDP within regional development priorities and UNDP corporate policy directions.

6. The evaluation team has attempted to validate findings from the outcome evaluations through triangulation (mainly interviews with UNDP staff and partners in the countries visited). More time, however, has been spent on collecting evaluative evidence concerning all the projects that were not covered by outcome evaluations. There have been three main sources for this: (a) project documents, progress reports and reviews; (b) knowledge products produced by the projects; and (c) interviews with UNDP staff in New York, the regional centres and country offices, as well as with partners such as governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), regional institutions, and other development actors.

7. Apart from New York, the evaluation team visited the two UNDP regional centres in Asia-Pacific, in Bangkok and Colombo, as well as the subregional Pacific centre in Suva, Fiji. Besides interviewing UNDP staff and collecting documentary evidence, a number of other actors were also interviewed in these places. Team members also visited Ulan Bator, Mongolia; Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic; Manila, Philippines; Jakarta, Indonesia; and Suva, Fiji. The main interaction

here was with the UNDP country offices and with partners, regional institutions and other development actors. A few additional interviews were conducted in Malaysia. A total of around 200 persons were interviewed.

8. The general absence of systematic monitoring systems with baselines, benchmarks and indicators makes it difficult to assess outcomes. This was a problem for all the outcome evaluations, and even more so for assessing projects not covered by the evaluations. It is a clear limitation that only half of the projects were covered by the three outcome evaluations. Clearly the evaluation of the other half was much more superficial, given the limited time and resources for that evaluation.

9. In addition, there is the usual problem of attribution, which is particularly severe in relation to projects focusing on the creation of knowledge products and advocacy and policy advice based on them.

II Main findings

10. This chapter presents the evaluation findings. It is structured around the customary evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

A. Relevance

11. The overall thrust of the RCF is highly relevant and has provided a people-centred perspective for dealing with the challenges of the region in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, with the exception of its global work on human development, in the area of macroeconomic and trade policies UNDP faces a credibility issue, as there are several large multilateral organizations – including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the African Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – that are already active in these areas. Those organizations have greater specialized intellectual and analytical capacity, and in some cases their policy advice is linked to flows of loans and grants. Moreover, they have traditional ties with the key institutions of government that are generally responsible for economic and trade policy.

12. Over the years UNDP has accumulated influence in the area of democratic governance, especially in new and politically sensitive areas such as corruption, human rights and capacity-building of parliaments. While governance is a mature UNDP practice, it continues to be very relevant in the Asia-Pacific region. With its comparative advantage, UNDP can continue to play an important role in fostering best practices at all levels, especially given the increasing importance of governance to achieving the MDGs. The regional governance initiatives have facilitated the way for future interventions by raising awareness on issues of gender mainstreaming, civic engagement, accountability and transparency, and how those issues promote good governance. In addition, the RCF is especially relevant since its unique position allows the programme to operate in areas that are sensitive at the country level, such as justice and human rights.

13. The RCF projects in the HIV/AIDS cluster have been relevant in the Asia-Pacific context, where there are more than eight million people infected with the HIV virus. The RCF projects have contributed to setting the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the wider context of societal and human development processes, and to some extent focused on cross-border factors in the spread of the epidemic that had been neglected by other organizations.

14. While the RCF projects under the subregional cooperation cluster vary from issues on trade and economic cooperation over combating human trafficking to peacebuilding and disaster mitigation, they are all relevant in meeting the regionality criteria of the RCF. Furthermore, in view of the numerous conflicts in the region as well as the recurring natural disasters, the RCF is especially pertinent to addressing the current

challenges of the respective subregions as they confront the cross-cutting theme of crisis prevention.

15. Although there has been significant progress in the area of gender and development, gender inequalities continue to characterize the socioeconomic and cultural environment in the Asia-Pacific region. Recognizing that mainstreaming gender is essential to achieving the MDGs and human development, the inclusion of gender as a cross-cutting theme in the second RCF is very relevant. UNDP acknowledges that despite its commitment to mainstreaming gender across all practices, gender equality remains elusive. In fact, in each of the core practice areas, the effective inclusion of gender has yet to be institutionalized.

16. Generally, the second RCF has been relevant and has created strategic opportunities for future interventions by UNDP and other organizations to deal with regional development challenges and trends to work towards achieving the MDGs in the Asia/Pacific region.

B. Effectiveness

17. This section is based on a detailed presentation and assessment of all 30 projects and programmes under RCF II. They have been clustered into four thematic areas: (a) poverty cluster; (b) governance cluster; (c) HIV/AIDS cluster; and (d) subregional cooperation cluster.

Poverty cluster

18. Overall, the poverty cluster has been successful in producing an impressive number of products, notably analyses and reports that are mainly of good quality. Where the programme has been lacking is in follow-up to these studies through dissemination and advocacy, leading consequently to less-than-optimal use and policy impact. It can, however, be argued that the country-level follow-up goes beyond the limited capacity of regional programme and should be the primary responsibility of the country offices. For that reason, it is important to establish better links with the country programmes. Where those links have been inadequate, the reason has sometimes been lack of communication with and involvement of the country office in the regional programme. It would also be important to involve the governments systematically when RCF missions visit countries in order to generate 'buy-in'.

19. The benefits of the regional programme, including the workshops and training events under the RCF, have been recognized as putting the country into the regional context and for learning from others. On the other hand, in many cases the country offices have not had the resources to initiate follow-up, even when the regional programme has been highly relevant to their needs. It would be useful to consider establishing a regional facility under the RCF from which the country offices could draw for emerging topics.

20. The poverty cluster has been well managed with limited resources, which were further strained temporarily during the establishment of the regional centres. However, it is necessary to find an appropriate balance between undertaking regional programme work – including not only the production of knowledge products, but, importantly, the necessary follow-up to them – and policy advice and technical backstopping to the country offices. Also for this reason, a further consolidation of programme focus is necessary. For the credibility of its programme, UNDP must stay the course in its areas of expertise over a longer period of time.

Governance cluster

21. Democratic governance is one of the five UNDP core practice areas. Under the RCF, 11 projects fall under the governance cluster. Overall, the regional governance programmes have contributed to fostering democratic governance practices and

processes, especially in the newly emerging economies and the smaller Pacific Island Countries (PICs). The results of the programmes bear testimony to the value of the regional initiatives to elevate governance issues on the policy agenda of many of the countries.

22. While the effectiveness of the regional governance programmes has been attributed to the quality of the project staff and their ability to develop and establish cooperation with the country offices, there is concern about the weak linkages between regional and country programmes and that the regional initiatives do not adequately address country priorities. Some country office staff have limited knowledge of regional initiatives and seem to work independently even when similar programmes are offered. There is a need for closer coordination with country programmes and other donor initiatives at the country and subregional levels. The regional governance projects would benefit greatly from clearly defined partnership strategies with stakeholders and donor agencies to ensure impact through improved coordination of efforts in participating countries.

23. The outcome evaluation highlighted potential threats to effectiveness, including differing agendas of external actors; the sensitivity of some governments to certain human rights and governance themes; and the heterogeneous nature of the region. Some stakeholders believe that UNDP projects are reluctant to address highly sensitive human rights issues even though those issues have been identified as key development constraints in the region. While the regional governance programmes have reinforced learning and contributed to reforms, they are prone to lapses where there is insufficient political will and critical mass.

24. The regional governance programmes occupy a unique position as they can operate in areas such as justice and human rights that are sensitive at the country level. Furthermore, the initiatives have facilitated the way for future interventions by raising awareness of gender mainstreaming, civic engagement, accountability and transparency, and how those issues promote good governance.

HIV/AIDS cluster

25. As part of the theme 'democratic governance for human development', four projects focusing on HIV/AIDS have been implemented. The projects in the HIV/AIDS cluster have focused on cross-border factors in the spread of the epidemic neglected by many other organizations, and in this area the RCF has made a real difference. The regional programme has also proved its effectiveness in dealing with the sensitive issues linked to the epidemic. But the programme has not been sufficiently linked to country programmes. Even sensitive issues eventually have to be dealt with at the country level, and the link between the regional centre in Colombo and the country offices must be strengthened.

26. The effectiveness of completed projects has varied, and some project outcomes could not be sustained. All the projects were severely hampered by cutbacks in funding, although apparently there is some disagreement between the regional centre in Colombo and the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific about the justification for this. Not all the activities under the three completed projects measure up to the regionality criteria. A clear division of labour should be found between the regional programme and the country programmes. The gender dimension of the epidemic is crucial and must be addressed much more consistently.

27. Another question is whether HIV/AIDS projects need to be part of a *regional* programme such as the Asia-Pacific RCF. Most of the efforts to combat HIV/AIDS unfold at the national and local levels and have become quite well entrenched in most Asian countries.

Subregional cooperation cluster

28. Seven projects have been clustered under this heading. The projects have in common that by and large they are truly regional – that is, they measure up to the regionality criteria which are important for the RCF. In other respects they are very different in their substance, modalities and objectives, and in terms of their effectiveness. The Tumen River and Silk Road projects have been under implementation for a long time but are both characterized by a huge gap between towering ambitions and meagre resources. In both cases it seems necessary for the governments involved to take ownership and contribute more actively to project implementation. Otherwise the results will continue to be of limited significance and a far cry from the potential. The United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, in contrast, was been endowed and has succeeded in bringing several organizations together, and notably in bringing governments on board. The project has addressed sensitive issues and has been very effective in furthering an anti-trafficking agenda in the sub-region.

29. The 'PeacePac' project deals with highly relevant issues in the PICs but spreads its limited resources on so many different activities that it harms effectiveness. It is a problem that the project tries to span human crisis, natural disaster prevention, and risk reduction and mitigation. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) project forms part of a longstanding cooperation between UNDP and this important regional institution. To some extent it has focused on building much-needed capacity to narrow the gap between the new, very poor ASEAN countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) and the others, but UNDP funding appears to have been supporting a range of other activities not all central to its mandate. Finally, the two tsunami projects form part of a response to an obvious need. The main issue here is whether those projects will succeed in building capacity in a way that is aligned and coordinated with all the other initiatives carried out by the numerous actors in the post-Tsunami arena.

C. Efficiency

30. With a total budget of $89,738,163 spread thinly over five years, the limited resources have posed challenges to the RCF. Efficiency is compromised when the programme tries to deliver too much in terms of thematic coverage to a large number of countries with its limited resources (the PeacePac initiative is an example). The limited resources have constrained the impact of many innovative programmes, which were unable to capitalize on regional initiatives, as in the case of the HIV/AIDS projects, the Regional Environmental Governance and other governance projects.

31. The problem of limited resources is aggravated by complex financial tracking systems that make it difficult to monitor the efficiency of programme delivery. The cumbersome and lengthy application, procurement and exit procedures have deterred some external stakeholders from engaging with UNDP because the disproportionate administrative and time costs required to access relatively small amounts of funds outweighed potential benefits.

32. The financial modality of the second RCF was to engage with numerous partners – such as governments, NGOs, donors and regional organizations – to ensure the cost effectiveness of the programmes. At the planning stage, it was envisaged that out of the $130 million estimated for the RCF, UNDP would provide $71 million while the balance (45 per cent) would be mobilized from other partners. In actuality, almost two-thirds of the funding of the second RCF came from UNDP target for resource assignment from the core funds. While the projects under the governance, HIV/AIDS and subregional cooperation clusters managed to secure almost half of their funding from other resources, in the case of the poverty cluster projects, total co-funding was only 13 per cent.

33. Prior to the establishment of the regional centres in 2004, the management and coordination of the governance programmes were decentralized, with UNOPS as the executing agency. There was criticism of how the RCF projects were being executed by

UNOPS until April 2006, when the execution function was shifted to the regional centres. Since UNOPS was involved almost exclusively with administrative support there were no backstopping staff that could interact substantively with the project personnel. Without sufficient understanding of the importance or substance of the projects, UNOPS support was inefficient and characterized by chronic delays. Although the efficiency of implementation had improved and was satisfactory overall, the cost of management was relatively high. In fact, the regional centres (and the SURF) accounted for 15 per cent of total RCF expenses.

34. Despite its relatively low budget, the second RCF for Asia-Pacific has managed to harness its resources to generate an impressively large number of studies that provide an alternative perspective and influence on national pro-poor policies within the region. These studies (such as the regional and subregional human development reports) have been produced in a relatively short period of time by a very limited number of professional project staff. The RCF was efficient in its use of electronic media to enhance networking with partners and stakeholders as well as to disseminate the knowledge products.

35. The establishment of the regional centres in Bangkok and Colombo consumed time and resources midway through RCF II. This created a good deal of turbulence and at short notice led to reductions in the budgets of a number of the projects. However, the centres have evolved remarkably well in relatively short time and have injected a new dynamism into the regional programme. From a narrow management perspective it might have been more efficient to create just one centre, but the two centres, located in the South and South-East Asian sub-regions respectively and with their thematic division of labour, appear to be an appropriate institutional setup, given the political considerations as well as the development challenges.

36. Prior to the establishment of the sub-regional centre in Suva, the Pacific subregion tended to be largely ignored in most regional programme interventions. The establishment of the Pacific centre in Suva in 2005 was certainly a step in the right direction and has managed to infuse the programme in the Pacific Islands with new energy.

D. Sustainability

37. Overall, the evaluation team considers the sustainability of the RCF outcomes and benefits to be varying. Stakeholders have stressed that the key to sustainability is to engage country offices to take a role in maintaining momentum and sustaining national-level initiatives. Otherwise, while the RCF may have produced innovative initiatives, many of these will dissipate at the end of the project. However, some country offices find it difficult to sustain the benefits from the RCF activities and policy changes when the initiatives do not rank high among national priorities. On the other hand, for RCF activities which are well linked (and relevant) to country programmes, the benefits have been sustained and integrated at the country level, as in the case of some activities of the Regional Energy Programme for Poverty Reduction and the Pacific Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, which have managed to replicate their pilot project using private funds.

38. In aggregate, the project outputs of the PIC-focused initiatives seem to have been more sustainable in that (a) they have been successfully integrated into country plans and initiatives and/or are being used as a basis for policy development; and (b) they have led to follow-on activities.

39. Generally, sustainability in all the thematic and cross-cutting initiatives requires the development of long-term, multi-faceted partnerships with all key institutions in the region and networking at all levels. However, with limited resources, there is a need for UNDP to make strategic choices in terms of target countries and thematic focus.

III. Conclusions

A. Relevance

40. By and large, the programme has succeeded in addressing critical problems of the Asian region and the Pacific subregion. This has happened at a time when many parts of Asia as well as the Pacific Islands have gone through dramatic changes in both the economic and the political sphere. The programme has been flexible enough to address the changing needs of various parts – and partners – of the region.

41. At the core of RCF II have been activities aimed at fostering sustainable human development and achieving the MDGs. However, its contribution to the goals has been largely indirect. The programme has primarily produced a vast range of knowledge products in these and associated areas. Most of the knowledge products have certainly been relevant, but their dissemination has not been given the required attention. The knowledge products have been used for training, capacity development and advocacy, much needed but highly insufficient owing to the limited resources of the programme.

42. Overall, there has been a lack of clarity in the structuring of the RCF. This militates against giving the programme a clear strategic thrust.

43. Despite these critical remarks, it is nonetheless clear that the main themes of RCF II – and the corresponding clusters of projects – have been relevant for the Asia-Pacific region. In spite of the remarkable economic dynamism and the success in poverty reduction in recent years, combating poverty remains the paramount development challenge. The regional human development reports and MDG reports, as well as a range of other knowledge products, have been relevant and useful as a basis for advocacy, capacity development and policy advice targeted at governments, regional institutions, NGOs and other development actors. If the human development perspective – and its relation to achieving the MDGs – is focused, sharpened and refined, UNDP can maintain and strengthen its comparative advantage in a way that is highly relevant to the development challenges of the Asia-Pacific region.

B. Effectiveness

44. Overall, it is likely that the RCF II has contributed to poverty reduction, human development and achievement of MDGs, but mainly indirectly. There have been a few downstream activities directly supporting poor beneficiaries, such as the microcredit programme under Pacific Sustainable Livelihoods Programme in the Pacific Islands. But the main thrust of the programme has been upstream, aiming at producing and disseminating knowledge, creating awareness, building capacity and influencing policy. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness, outcome and impact of such efforts. There are many actors and factors at play, and the link between advocacy based on UNDP knowledge products, changes in policies and/or practices and reduced poverty or enhanced human development is at best indirect and difficult to track down. Moreover, the RCF II has no framework for systematic monitoring with baselines and indicators, and hence the evaluation has entailed a fair degree of circumstantial evidence and partly subjective assessments, based mainly on documentary studies and interviews with a large number of stakeholders.

45. The programme has been effective in producing a vast number of knowledge products, generally of reasonably good quality. Quality might have been even better if the quantities produced under certain projects had been somewhat limited. The flagship products have been the regional human development reports and the MDG reports; these have been very useful and have contributed to raising the profile of the RCF. The

programme has also organized a large number of training sessions, workshops, seminars and conferences and used these to disseminate ideas, findings and policy advice.

46. Nevertheless, the dissemination, capacity-building, advocacy and policy advice activities have not been given enough attention. The financial and human resources of the programme have not been sufficient. Moreover, the link between the RCF and the UNDP country offices has been too weak. Ideally, the major part of the capacity-building and advocacy work could be carried out by the country offices that have good relations with governments and other development actors. But this happens only to a limited extent, and thus good opportunities for increased effectiveness and impact are lost.

47. The RCF has dealt successfully with a range of sensitive issues such as corruption, human rights and HIV/AIDS. There is no doubt that a regional programme has a comparative advantage in tackling such issues, although ultimately they have to be addressed at the national level.

48. The programme also focused on a number of cross-border problems, and promoted regional advocacy. However, a number of projects – and activities under them – do not really measure up to the regionality criteria and might as well have been implemented at the national level.

49. The gender dimension has remained a weakness in the second RCF in spite of attempts to strengthen it through, inter alia, the development of a gender strategy and the establishment of a gender steering committee. Mainstreaming gender in all parts of a future programme remains a huge challenge.

50. The effectiveness of RCF II has been hampered by spreading the limited resources over too many themes, practice areas, projects and service lines. The aim of the programme was to concentrate on 20-25 projects; it ended up with 30. Perhaps more seriously, under many projects a wide range of somewhat disjointed activities have been carried out with little internal coherence and lack of prioritization. The programme has in fact lacked a clear strategic focus, and the attempt to become more demand-driven and responsive has resulted in the implementation of a wide range of different activities without any clear direction – other than some affinity with RCF II themes. The aggregate result is that the programme has not sufficiently positioned UNDP as a strategic development actor building on its comparative advantages.

C. Efficiency

51. Against a projected RCF II budget of $130 million for the five year period 2002-2006, the budget that materialized was just under $90 million – a shortfall of more than 30 per cent. The shortfall in resources particularly affected the 'sustainable development' theme. The RCF II projects were also negatively affected by budget cuts necessitated by the costs of setting up the regional centres in Bangkok and Colombo and the subregional centre in Suva. The way this was implemented adversely affected a number of projects. In many cases the budget cuts came at short notice, which generated negative reactions among some partners and staff members. Some expressed the view that the credibility of UNDP was eroded. Nevertheless, it is the view of the evaluation team that it was the right decision to establish the regional centres. They have infused the programme with new dynamics and provided an appropriate infrastructure for future regional programmes. The technical support and backstopping they offer to UNDP country offices is greatly appreciated, and the centres – with their division of labour – are better placed to provide a decentralized, effective and efficient implementation structure.

52. The programme has been quite efficient in producing a vast number of knowledge products and other outputs with limited human and financial resources. Overall, the staff have been dedicated and hardworking. However, resources have been spread too thin, which has reduced not only effectiveness but also efficiency.

53. A significant weakness of the programme is the lack of an adequate monitoring and evaluation framework. That weakness is not just a problem for the RCF but is a general weakness in the work of UNDP. The results-based management framework introduced under RCF II is not in itself sufficient. The general lack of a systematic monitoring framework with baselines, benchmarks and indicators makes it difficult to assess the progress of the programme as well as individual projects, and results in evaluations that are based on somewhat shaky ground. This evaluation is no exception! An improved monitoring and evaluation framework could greatly enhance programme efficiency and effectiveness.

D. Sustainability

54. The wide range of activities under the many projects and service lines has militated against sustainability of the outcomes and benefits. So in terms of sustainability the outcome has been mixed. There have simply been too few resources, particularly human resources, to follow up on the many initiatives. Moreover, the focus on production of knowledge products has in itself undermined sustainability to some extent. The dissemination and capacity development parts of the programme that are vital to sustaining the benefits have not received enough attention.

55. The weak linkage between the regional programme and UNDP country offices has also limited sustainability. Ideally, the country offices could play an important role in following up, providing policy advice and building capacity, based on the regional knowledge products. But this has happened only to a limited extent. Finally, it is a problem that most of the projects under RCF II have been only 2-3 years in duration. Although this may be sufficient in some cases, there is a need to work on many projects and themes with a much longer time horizon. This will contribute to making the outcomes and benefits more sustainable.

IV Recommendations

56. The evaluation is timed to contribute to the formulation of the next regional programme in the Asia-Pacific region. The three outcome evaluations – on the poverty, governance and HIV-AIDS clusters of projects – include a large number of very specific and detailed recommendations. What follows here is a limited number of recommendations of a more general nature.

Recommendation 1. *The programme should concentrate on fewer objectives, themes, projects, service lines and intended outcomes.* This is a recurrent theme in the outcome evaluations, and it is a key to greater effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Recommendation 2. *The new programme should have a clearer strategic thrust, informed by the UNDP human development concept and focused on the link between governance and poverty reduction and achievement of MDGs.* This will both contribute to greater effectiveness and raise the profile of UNDP in the region based on its comparative advantage. Including the MDGs in the strategic focus should not imply that the programme can deal with anything and everything that is included in the MDGs.

Recommendation 3. *Concentration and a clearer strategic focus must entail a reduction of themes/practice areas.* The environmental theme was curtailed in practice under RCF II and may be reconsidered in view of the capacity and competence of UNDP vis-à-vis other strong actors in this area. Similar considerations might concern the area of natural disaster risk reduction. It should also be considered whether there is a continued need for regional UNDP HIV/AIDS projects.

Recommendation 4. *If macro-economic and trade issues are kept in the programme, the relevant competences require strengthening.* The issues are clearly relevant for poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs, and the human development perspective is important. But UNDP faces an uphill struggle to become recognized as a qualified actor in a field dominated by actors with established credibility and large resources such as the World Bank, ADB and UNCTAD.

Recommendation 5. *The programme must strike the right balance between supply (strategic focus) and demand (the changing needs of region).* In the past – RCF I – the programme was primarily supply-driven. It has moved towards becoming more demand-driven, and this has enhanced its relevance and effectiveness. But there is also a risk of becoming too demand-driven and thus losing strategic focus.

Recommendation 6. *There must be a better balance in the programme between the basic production of knowledge products and – more – capacity development, advocacy and policy advice.* This will lead to better utilization of the many qualified outputs and hence greater effectiveness.

Recommendation 7. *The regional programme should be better linked to the country programmes.* The weak linkage between the regional programme and the country offices is a recurrent theme in the outcome evaluations. The relevance and effectiveness of the programme can be enhanced if the country offices get more involved in programme planning (through substantive consultation) as well as in using the knowledge products for capacity-building, advocacy and policy advice.

Recommendation 8. *The programme should concentrate on projects that measure up to the regionality criteria.* Having too many projects and activities that are not truly regional dilutes the programme and distorts its profile. It is important that the programme concentrate on issues and modalities that are regional in character.

Recommendation 9. *The gender dimension must be mainstreamed in the programme.* In spite of recent attempts to strengthen the gender dimension, it remains a weak point. In view of the crucial importance of the gender dimension for poverty reduction, human development and achieving the MDGs, mainstreaming should be accorded high priority. It will be necessary to strengthen the gender competence (more gender specialists) in all three regional centres.

Recommendation 10. *It is necessary to strengthen monitoring and evaluation.* The lack of an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework with baselines, benchmarks and indicators makes it difficult to monitor the progress of projects as well as the entire programme. An improved monitoring and reporting framework will also strengthen the foundation for reviews and evaluations. Thus it is both a management tool and an instrument for better documentation of results.

Recommendation 11. *The regional programme and the regional centres should catalyse closer cooperation with other United Nations organizations based on a clear division of labour.* Building on the United Nations aim of 'delivering as one', UNDP must find its new role in closer cooperation with other United Nations organizations. The regional programmes provide important opportunities for furthering this agenda.

Recommendation 12. *There is scope for closer collaboration with regional institutions, but it must be selective, focused and based on a clear division of labour.* The cooperation with ADB can be intensified. Support to ASEAN must be more selective and focused, based on UNDP priorities. The cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat on the monitoring framework for the Pacific Plan may be considered exemplary.

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Evaluation

Management response to the evaluation of the second regional cooperation framework for Asia and the Pacific, 2002-2006*

Context, background and findings

1. The present document constitutes the response of UNDP management to the report of the independent evaluation of the UNDP second regional cooperation framework for Asia and the Pacific, 2002-2006. The Framework was approved by the UNDP Executive Board in July 2001 and subsequently extended for one year through 2007 in order to synchronize with corporate multi-year funding framework (MYFF) 2004-2007. The evaluation was commissioned by the UNDP Evaluation Office to assess the overall programme performance and outcomes of the second regional cooperation framework. A meta-evaluation of the framework assessed its strategic position, achievement of intended goals and results, performance of policy advice, knowledge management and capacity development activities, synergies and partnerships.

2. The final draft of the evaluation was structured around the customary evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The findings of the draft evaluation have provided useful inputs towards the formulation of the third regional programme for Asia and the Pacific (2008-2011).

3. Management was pleased to note the overall evaluation findings that (a) the second framework programme succeeded, by and large, in addressing vital problems of the Asian region and the Pacific subregion; and (b) the principal directions of the second framework are relevant and have provided a people-centred perspective for dealing with the challenges that the region faces in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Management was also satisfied to note the finding that the framework dealt successfully with a range of new and sensitive areas on democratic governance – such as corruption and human rights – as well as those linked to

* The compilation of data required to provide the Executive Board with the most current information has delayed submission of the present document.

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HIV/AIDS, and that at this stage a regional programme had a comparative advantage in tackling such issues. Management further noted the observation that the regional centres established during the second framework cycle have developed well in a relatively short time and have infused new dynamism into the regional programme, being better organized to provide an effective, efficient implementation structure. Finally, management notes the unique accomplishments of UNDP highlighted in the evaluation findings – in the area of anti-trafficking, for instance – as well as valuable knowledge products such as regional Millennium Development Goals reports in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank, and regional human development reports.

4. Management has taken serious note of the issues raised and recommendations made by the independent evaluation. In the annex to the present document, following the standard template, UNDP management presents detailed responses to each of the recommendations and some key issues, and proposes follow-up action with time frame and responsible units specified.

Annex
Evaluation of the Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific, 2002-2006
(April 2007)

Evaluation recommendation 1 *The programme should concentrate on fewer objectives, themes, projects, service lines and intended outcomes.* This is a recurrent theme in the outcome evaluations, and it is a key to greater effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.		
Management response: Agree. Conscious efforts were undertaken to concentrate on fewer thematic areas of interventions and projects under the second regional cooperation framework for Asia and the Pacific (RCF II), 2002-2006. RCF II managed to bring down the number of projects to 30, in comparison to 110 projects under the first framework (1997-2001). Further prioritization will be undertaken to ensure a more strategic focus and concentration.		
Key actions	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
1.1 The themes and intended outcomes of the new regional programme document (RPD) for Asia and the Pacific (2008-2011) will be formulated through consultations with the stakeholders (programme countries, UNDP country offices, regional centres, relevant headquarters units, United Nations organizations, regional institutions and civil society) to best respond to the regional development challenges – ongoing and emerging – in Asia and the Pacific. The RPD will focus on the areas of UNDP comparative advantages and strategic priorities outlined in the UNDP strategic plan, 2008-2011. The consultative process permits further narrowing down of the strategic focus and priorities within the framework of the strategic plan in the Asia-Pacific context, informed by stakeholders' participation and ownership.	May 2006-May 2007 (Series of internal/ external stakeholder consultations and discussions, and regional programme document formulation and finalization)	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific(RBAP)/ Regional Support Unit (RSU), regional centres
1.2 Effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of regional programmes will be among the key elements focused on during the project formulation stage, as well as closely monitored as per the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework by the Regional Centres Management Board that includes representation of programme country Governments, UNDP Resident Representatives and Country Directors, UNDP headquarters Bureaux/Units and senior staff of regional centres. In addition, the Advisory Panels established under RCF II with participation of eminent personalities and experts from the region, will continue to guide the work of the regional practice teams. The Regional Centres Management Board reviews and approves the overall annual work plans of the regional centres and the respective regional programmes.	2007-2011	RBAP/RSU, regional centres, Regional Centres Management Board
Evaluation Recommendation 2: *The new programme should have a clearer strategic thrust, informed by the UNDP human development concept and focused on the link between governance and poverty reduction and achievement of MDGs.* This will both contribute to greater effectiveness and raise the profile of UNDP in the region based on its comparative advantage. Concentrating on the MDGs does not provide adequate strategic focus to the programme.		

Management response

Agree on the need to be more strategic in the use of the limited resources in support of regional programme.

However, management is not clear about the statement that "*Concentrating on the MDGs does not provide adequate strategic focus to the programme.*" RCF II was not intended to "*deal with anything and everything that is included in the MDGs*" as the evaluation implies; nor will the next RPD.

Instead, all UNDP regional interventions, identified in the areas of UNDP comparative advantage, will be formulated and implemented so that they contribute to acceleration of MDG achievement in the region through the provision of regional public goods and policy advice at the country level on the preparation of MDG-based development strategies.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
2.1 RCF II focus was guided by the corporate UNDP MYFF 2004-2007 practice areas and service lines which were intended to make the greatest contribution to the achievement of the MDGs and for which there was high demand. In a similar manner, the RPD will be guided by UNDP new Strategic Plan 2008-2011, with sharpened strategic areas of intervention tailored for the Asia-Pacific context, focusing especially on the cross-linkages among programmatic areas such as poverty reduction and governance. The strategic priorities of the RPD will be further narrowed down through stakeholder consultations.	May 2006-May 2007 (stakeholder consultations and RPD formulation/ finalization stage)	RBAP/RSU, regional centres

Evaluation recommendation 3

Concentration and a clearer strategic focus must entail a reduction of themes/practice areas. The environmental theme was curtailed in practice under RCF II and focus on this area may be reconsidered for RCF III in view of the capacity and competence of UNDP vis-à-vis other strong actors in this area. Similar considerations might concern the area of natural disaster risk reduction. Consideration should be given to whether there is a continued need for regional UNDP HIV/AIDS projects.

Management response

Agree on the general recommendation for a more strategic focus, especially related to regional interventions in the areas of environment, natural disaster reduction and HIV/AIDS.

Environment

The scale and nature of many environmental challenges confronting countries in Asia and the Pacific, such as climate change, deteriorated ecosystems, surpass the ability of an individual country's government to fashion viable responses, and therefore call for regional and subregional support for national efforts especially in the presence of cross-border spillovers. Consultations with stakeholders in the region so far have consistently highlighted and confirmed that this area needs regional interventions and solutions. Furthermore, the new resource allocation framework of the Global Environment Facility has greatly limited a scope for regional level initiatives. This gap calls for UNDP continued regional interventions in this area.

Natural disaster risk reduction

Again, the frequency and scale of natural disasters that have hit the countries of the Asia-Pacific region overwhelm the capacity of an individual government to cope, as seen in the case of the December 2004 tsunami disaster. Setting up a regional aid management and results monitoring system enabled the tsunami-affected countries and the international community to track and compare results. Furthermore, UNDP has been acknowledged as a key United Nations organization in early recovery work, which could be facilitated through the development of a regional surge capacity.

HIV/AIDS **It is necessary to continue regional assistance to combat HIV/AIDS for tackling the spread of this disease through cross-border trafficking and the need to assist countries in preparing multi-sectoral responses in the context of MDG-based development strategies.** **In accordance with the global and regional divisions of labour agreed to by 10 United Nations agency partners, at the regional level, UNDP has been assigned the lead role in addressing issues of mobility and trafficking, in mobilizing, channelling and helping coordinate the United Nations system response to the issue.**		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
3.1 The RPD focus will be sharpened in the Asia-Pacific context through the ongoing extensive consultation process.	May 2006-May 2007 (stakeholder consultations and RPD formulation/ finalization stage)	RBAP/RSU, regional centres, Regional Centres Management Board
3.2 *Environment.* In line with the corporate priorities expressed in the strategic plan, and given the magnitude of environment/energy-related challenges in the region, the next regional programme will have a focus on environment and sustainable development, mainly to support the mainstreaming of environmental and energy issues into national development strategies to achieve MDGs, in cooperation with UNEP, other relevant United Nations agencies and regional and subregional institutions. The poverty-environment nexus and energy-poverty challenges will also be addressed and supported, so as support to regional advocacy on climate change and adaptation. Access to carbon financing by individual countries will be supported for improved environmental management and broader sustainable development benefits. Close collaboration with UNEP will be forged in working in the area of environment and sustainable development based on the corporate memorandum of understanding between UNEP-UNDP. Discussions are under way with UNEP Regional Office in Bangkok for joint collaboration.	2007-2011	RBAP/RSU, regional centres, Regional Centres Management Board
3.3 *Natural disaster risk reduction.* Within the corporate priorities identified in the strategic plan, and taking into account a grave need in the region in this area, the next regional programme will have a focus on crisis prevention and recovery, with initiatives for building surge capacity for disaster management, and economic recovery for "building back better."		RBAP/RSU, regional centres
3.3 HIV/AIDS In line with the global and regional division of labour agreed to by 10 United Nations organization partners, and in response to the growing need in the region with one of the fastest growth rates of HIV infection, the UNDP regional programme intends to continue to work on HIV/AIDS, focusing on the issues that are distinctly regional, such as cross-border trafficking and multi-sectoral responses at the country level.	2007-2011	RBAP/RSU, regional centres

Evaluation recommendation 4 *If macro-economic and trade issues are kept in the programme, the relevant competences require strengthening.* The issues are clearly relevant for poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs, and the human development perspective is important. But UNDP faces an uphill struggle to become recognized as a qualified actor in a field dominated by actors with established credibility and large resources, such as the World Bank, ADB and UNCTAD.		
Management response Agree. In order for UNDP to best assist the programme countries of the region, especially least developed countries and low- income countries, to develop and implement MDG-based national development strategies, it is imperative to strengthen the in-house advisory capacity in the areas of macro-economics and trade, while maximizing the benefits of synergy and complementarities through strong collaboration with other United Nations agencies and regional institutions, especially the development banks.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
4. Building on the current work under RCF II, the capacity and expertise on macro-economic and trade at the regional centres will be enhanced through the regional programme 2008-2011, by placing competent and trained staff specifically in the context of support to the work related to the MDGs in the region, focusing on initiatives such as regional integration and South-South cooperation.	2007-2011	Regional centres
Evaluation recommendation 5 *The programme must strike the right balance between supply (strategic focus) and demand (the changing needs of the region).* In the past – RCF I – the programme was primarily supply-driven. It has moved towards becoming more demand-driven, and that has enhanced its relevance and effectiveness. But there is a risk of becoming too demand-driven and thus losing strategic focus.		
Management response Agree.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
5.1 The areas of regional intervention in the next regional programme 2008-2011 will be determined specifically to strike the right balance between strategic focus and demand of the region with changing needs.	May 2006-May 2007 (stakeholder consultations and RPD formulation/ finalization stage)	RBAP/RSU, regional centres
5.2 The overall balance between supply (strategic focus) and demand (changing needs of the region) will be guided by the Regional Centres Management Board (see above, key action for item 1). While ensuring responses to demands, the next regional programme will keep its focus on UNDP comparative advantages and strategic priorities outlined in the strategic plan, which will be further narrowed down through consultation with regional stakeholders. Supply to create demand at the country level will be undertaken for sensitive areas such as human rights, human trafficking, gender, transparency and accountability and carbon financing.		RBAP/RSU

5.3 Some resources will be set aside to permit rapid response to emerging needs in the region.	2008-2011	RBAP/RSU, regional centres
Evaluation recommendation 6 ***There must be a better balance in the programme between the basic production of knowledge products and more capacity development, advocacy and policy advice.*** **This will lead to better utilization of the many qualified outputs and hence greater effectiveness.**		
Management response **Agree. Corrective measures have been taken to address this issue. For instance, the flagship publications and knowledge products of RCF II, such as the regional MDG reports in collaboration with ESCAP and ADB, and the regional human development reports, have been widely utilized for capacity development, advocacy and policy advice at different levels.**		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
6. Further efforts will be made on this recommendation through implementation of the regional programme 2008-2011. In particular, the knowledge management team based in the Bangkok Regional Centre, together with other practice area teams, will work closely with UNDP country offices to help disseminate the regional knowledge products at the country level and explore ways to apply and translate them into concrete programmes at the country/local level for capacity development, advocacy and policy advice.	**2008-2011**	**Regional centres**
Evaluation recommendation 7 ***The regional programme should be better linked to the country programmes.*** **The weak linkage between the regional programme and the country offices is a recurrent theme in the outcome evaluations. The relevance and effectiveness of the programme can be enhanced if the country offices become more involved in programme planning (through consultation) and in using the knowledge products for capacity-building, advocacy and policy advice.**		
Management response **Agree. Measures have been implemented to establish a stronger regional-country programme linkage, as seen in a number of regional projects such as the Regional Energy Programme for Poverty Reduction, the Pacific Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, and the Regional HIV/AIDS and Development Programme.** **Furthermore, a number of specific arrangements have been put into place to ensure stronger linkages with UNDP country programmes in the region. These arrangements will continue and be enhanced during the next regional programme:** **(a) Formulation of programmes/ projects through consultations with the focal points at country offices;** **(b) Endorsement of programmes/ projects by programme countries and participation of government representatives in the Regional Centres Management Board;** **(c) Approval of regional centre annual work plan and annual reports by the Management Board, which comprises UNDP resident representatives and country directors in the Asia and the Pacific region;** **(d) Provision of policy advisory support to the country offices and the countries by regional programme staff. Thirty per cent of the staff time is currently devoted to this country office support/policy advisory function, to be increased to 40 per cent in the new regional programme.**		

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
7.1 For the next regional programme, 2008-2011, the projects will continue to be developed in full consultation with the Country Offices.	2007-2011	RBAP/RSU, Regional centres, Country Offices
7.2 The work of regional centres and regional programmes will be guided by the Regional Centre Management Board represented by Governments and UNDP Country Offices (see above, key action for item 1).	2008-2011	Regional Centres Management Board
7.3 In addition, policy advice on country programming by regional programme specialists will receive greater emphasis	2008-2011	Regional centres
Evaluation recommendation 8 ***The programme should concentrate on projects that measure up to the regionality criteria.*** **Having too many projects and activities that are not truly regional dilutes the programme and distorts its profile. It is important that the programme concentrate on issues and modalities that are regional in character.**		
Management response Agree. In fact, for approval, all the RCF II projects have been examined for regionality criteria in terms of provision of regional/sub-regional public goods, managing cross-border spillovers and externalities, exchange of experience and knowledge sharing.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
8. The approval process for programmes in the next RPD will place stronger emphasis on the need to satisfy one or more regionality criteria.	2007-2011	RBAP/RSU, regional centres
Evaluation recommendation 9 ***The gender dimension must be mainstreamed in the programme.*** **In spite of recent attempts to strengthen the gender dimension, it remains a weak point. In view of the crucial importance of the gender dimension for poverty reduction, human development and achieving the MDGs, mainstreaming should be accorded high priority. It will be necessary to strengthen the gender competence (more gender specialists) in all three regional centres.**		
Management response Agree on the need for strong focus on gender equality. This is an area where conscious and concerted efforts have been undertaken regionally to further overall gender equality and mainstreaming through a regional gender programme as well as with the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Regional Gender Steering Committee.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
9.1 The next regional programme will continue to provide resources to a dedicated regional gender programme that addresses key gender equality issues, while enhancing gender mainstreaming in all regional initiatives.	2008-2011	RBAP/RSU, regional centres
9.2 The programme will focus on gender equality (supporting region-wide campaigns to reduce and prevent gender-based violence), promotion of gender-sensitive policies, preparation of national gender mainstreaming strategies and incorporation of the goal of gender equality in MDG-based development strategies.	2008-2011	Regional centres

9.3 Gender considerations will receive priority in all regional programmes. A precondition for approval of regional programmes will be benchmarks on impact on gender. To ensure gender equality and track the status of gender mainstreaming, indicators will be built into the results and resource frameworks of each regional initiative.	2007-2011	RBAP/RSU, regional centres
9.4 The Asia-Pacific Regional Gender Steering Committee and the Regional Centres Management Board will monitor and ensure progress of gender mainstreaming.	2008-2011	Asia-Pacific Regional Gender Steering Committee, Regional Centres Management Board

Evaluation recommendation 10

It is necessary to strengthen monitoring and evaluation. **The lack of an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework with baselines, benchmarks and indicators makes it difficult to monitor the progress of projects as well as the entire programme. An improved monitoring and reporting framework will also strengthen the foundation for reviews and evaluations. Thus it is both a management tool and an instrument for better documentation of results.**

Management response

Agree. This challenge is applicable throughout the work of UNDP organization-wide. Without a robust corporate monitoring and evaluation framework, with credible baselines, benchmarks and indicators, the results of regional-level intervention will be difficult to measure. Measuring development outcomes derived from regional programmes/ projects (and attributing them specifically to UNDP support) is even more complex for UNDP, as UNDP increasingly focuses its work on United Nations-supported programmes at the country and regional levels. A special effort will be made to measure 'drivers of change' and establish direct causal link.

Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
7.1 Despite lack of common corporate monitoring and evaluation framework for UNDP regional programmes, the RPD will establish clearer, more practical and measurable benchmarks and indicators to monitor the progress of the regional projects. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be formulated to enhance greater development effectiveness and enable better evaluation of results. This will include the mandatory outcome evaluations, required reporting and audit.	2008-2011	RBAP/RSU, regional centres
7.2 Moreover, the Regional Centres Management Board will monitor and oversee the regional projects and work of regional centres.	Annually from 2008-2011	Regional Centres Management Board

Evaluation recommendation 11

The regional programme and the regional centres should catalyse closer cooperation with other United Nations organizations based on a clear division of labour. **Building on the United Nations aim of 'delivering as one', UNDP must find its new role in closer cooperation with other United Nations organizations. The regional programmes provide important opportunities for furthering this agenda**

Management response

Agree on the need for strong partnership with other United Nations organizations. The regional programmes have embarked on joint activities and collaboration with other United Nations organizations so as to deliver as 'One UN' at the regional level. MDG-related work at the regional level will continue to be undertaken in partnership with ESCAP and ADB. Collaboration is also forged with ExCom agencies through the Regional MDG Initiative programme to support roll-out countries in the preparation of MDG-based national development strategies. ExCom agencies have undertaken joint missions with the regional MDG Initiative team to the roll-out countries and are working together to sharpen the technical methodologies. Collaboration is ongoing with ILO through the poverty programmes and similarly with UNAIDS, UNIFEM, UNEP, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, OCHA, and OHCHR through other regional programmes.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
11.1 In the context of United Nations reform towards 'Delivering as One,' much stronger emphasis will be put in the next regional programme 2008-2011 on working with other United Nations organizations, to avoid duplication and maximize impact. Systematic effort will be undertaken to pool human resources from all the organizations for work on MDG-based national development strategies, with ILO on employment/decent work agenda, UNEP on the poverty-environment nexus, UNIFEM on gender, WTO/UNCTAD on trade, UNAIDS on HIV/AIDS, and UNCDF on inclusive finance, in areas of comparative advantages. Existing corporate partnership agreements and memorandums of understanding will form the basis of the partnerships.	2008-2011	RBAP, Regional centres
11.2 Through enhanced collaboration with other ExCom agencies (e.g., through Regional Directors Team meeting), joint efforts will be made to strengthen knowledge networking and sharing, and media training at the regional level. Efforts will also be made to pool the regional technical services of different organizations. A regional 'solution exchange' knowledge management platform is being established, along with a common roster of the pool of expertise available through different organizations for referral services.	2007-2011	RBAP through ExCom Regional Directors Team, regional centres

Evaluation recommendation 12

There is scope for closer collaboration with regional institutions, but it must be selective, focused and based on a clear division of labour. **The cooperation with ADB can be intensified. Support to ASEAN must be more selective and focused, based on UNDP priorities. The cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat on the monitoring framework for the Pacific Plan may be considered exemplary.**

Management response

Agree on the need for close collaboration with regional institutions. In fact, under RCF II, UNDP forged and enhanced strong partnerships, for instance with ESCAP and ADB on the MDG-related regional projects, and with regional organizations such as ASEAN, SAARC, Pacific Island Forum, Mekong River Commission Secretariat, Tumen River Secretariat, etc. Partnerships have also been developed with the Mahbub ul-Haq Human Development Centre and other non-governmental organizations, academia, regional think-tanks, and the private sector.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
12. Partnership-building beyond United Nations organizations will be strengthened in the next regional programme, with international financial institutions, regional organizations, civil society and private sector.	2008-2011	RBAP, regional centres

Evaluation key issue 1 The evaluation notes that the RCF II projects have been affected by 'budget cuts' following the establishment of regional centres in Bangkok and Colombo and the subregional centre in Suva.		
Management response It is misleading to state that the establishment of the regional centres resulted in a sudden reduction of funds, and the establishment of the regional centres was costly. No regional project budgets were cut. The rationale for establishing the regional centres was that while there would be an initial fixed cost, with time, the consolidation of projects scattered throughout the region will lead to significant economies of scale in overhead costs, while providing for a concentrated critical mass of expertise in different practice areas. This is what resulted, as can be seen in the increased delivery in 2005 and 2006 (average $18 million per annum), compared to average delivery of about $7 million annually from 2002-2004 (prior to the establishment of the regional centres). Hence, the impact of the establishment of regional centres should be seen over the entire RCF II time horizon. The resulting economies of scale have brought down the share of management cost.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
Efforts are being undertaken at the corporate level to finance the core posts of the regional centre management from the corporate biennium regular budget, which will help to reduce further the management cost of the centres.	Ongoing	RBAP/RSU, regional centres
Evaluation key issue 2 The evaluation report subsumes sustainable development under poverty or governance, not treating it as an independent cluster.		
Management response The evaluators introduce a new clustering of programmes into 4 areas (poverty, governance, HIV/AIDS and subregional cooperation). While it is agreed that the weight given to programmatic clusters changed in the course of implementation of RCF II, the main programmatic clusters as per the approved RCF II document remained the same. Although funding provided to the 'sustainable development' area was not in tune with the magnitude expected in RCF II, there was still a substantial programme in the area of sustainable development, and omission of this area in the clustering of programmes can give a distorted picture of RCF II.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
In line with the strategic plan, and given the scale of the development challenges in the region related to environment and energy, the new RPD for Asia and the Pacific (2008-2011) will have a dedicated focus area on environment and sustainable development, as mentioned earlier in the key actions under recommendation 3.	2008-2011	Regional centres